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VOL. III.

LONDON :
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MALPAS;

OR,

LE POURSUIVANT D'AMOUR.

A Romance.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE CAVALIER."

Now hold your mouth pour charite,
Bothe knighte and lady fre,
And herkeneth to my spell,
Of bataille and of chevalrie,
Of ladies love and druerie,
Anon I wol you tell.

CHAUCER'S "*Canterbury Tales*.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

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1822.



MALPAS.

CHAP. I.

Take it ; it is yours.

Be not so spiced, it is good gold,

And goodness is no gall to the conscience.

Beaumont and Fletcher.

THE moon, shining with a clear and unclouded splendour, lent the Red Squire and his companions light to retrace their steps to the castle, which was but a small bow-shot from the hosterie. A keen frost had already encrusted the trees and hedges with a thick and dazzling veil, and had spread over the velvet carpet of the greensward a mantle of minute atoms, which shone and sparkled with a thousand luminous variations infinitely

more beautiful than the coruscations of artificial manufacture. By short fits, the wind driving through a wood of ancient and stately trees, used by the barons as a herony, produced a solemn wailing, like the complaint of the spirit of the storm, and shook down myriads of icy particles, which appeared like stars of silver in the rays of the moon, whilst the owls in the battlements of the castle and abbey hooted dismally in the triumph of their nocturnal reign. The lights were not yet extinguished in the castle though the hour was late; but the brilliant lustre of the great lamp of night, wherever her rays were not warded off by the salient angles of the turrets, made them shew dim, sickly, and indistinct. The draw-bridge was already up, and the watchmen, with jealous attention, marched to and fro upon their posts.

Griffith Merodoc, in expectation that the constable would commence his explanation, walked silently beside him until they had reached the outer barbican of the castle; but observing his companion passed on towards the tilt

yard without seeking admission, he asked him whither they were going ?

“ Follow me ; I will tell thee anon,” answered Fierabras.

The sound of their voices disturbed the watchmen, who instantly challenged them ; but the constable, without speaking, made a sign with which they were acquainted, and passed on. A moment after, they reached the barrier leading into the tilt yard ; and Jannequin led the Welshman into the very midst, where it would have been impossible for any one to have approached them, unobserved, or to have overheard their discourse from the adjacent stations.

“ Now, old friend,” said the constable, in a low voice, and clapping his companion on the shoulder, “ What say’st thou to winning a hundred gold francs by a blast of thy breath ? Hal Vernoun would have jumped at the job ; but he’s a whit too proud for a trusty companion.”

“ A hundred gold francs !” replied the Cambrian, rubbing his hands ; “ why I say, and protest, and avouch, Sir Constaple, that I would place my preath,

and my lungs, and my pody, and all at your service, and pidding, and disposal, look you, so you will use them with reasons and discretions.”

“ Reason and discretion !” returned Fierabras ; “ it is thou who must use them with reason and discretion ; and perchance the frances may be doubled — hark — thou dost know — ”

He jerked his thumb towards the castle, and eyed the towers askance ; but the Welshman was not able to interpret his meaning.

“ Who is it you mean, Sir Constaple ?” said Merodoc, “ my Lord Paron ?”

“ No ; I mean — ” he caught hold of the Welshman’s tunic, and, turning him towards the castle, pointed to a light, which appeared in the second story of one of the turrets. “ See’st thou yon light i’ the keep ?”

“ Py Saint Winifred do I,” replied Griffith. “ What of it ?”

“ Know’st thou not who lies there ?”

“ Not I, save it pe your prisoner, Sir Auprey Marcel.”

“ Thou hast hit it, — ’tis his dungeon :

— he will have a cold bed and sorry commons.— I would have belted my knight with an iron girdle, and spurr'd him with a pair of shackles; but the marcher would have it otherwise.— He deserves death, fair or foul.”

“ Does he, py Saint Tavid ?” cried the Welshman, whose natural shrewdness easily penetrated the constable’s drift, and taught him to assume a simple artlessness; to disguise his real feelings from the treacherous Gascon.

“ By Saint David and Saint Denis !” returned Fierabras, “ he does. He is a false traitor, both to the queen and Sir Bertrand. In the lists at Hereford he refused the queen’s favour as her knight, and gave it to that minion Raimonnet de la Folie, whom I unhors’d ; and he hath by witchcraft and magic won the favour of the Lady Blanche, the baron’s wife.”

“ Say ye so, indeed truth ?” cried Mero doc with an affected emphasis of surprise and horror.

“ Nay, — doubt it not,” replied Jannequin : “ I swear, by the Holy Virgin

and my day of doom, it is sooth. But the wily poursuivant now pricks onward to his due guerdon, and it is for thee to say if thou wilt aid me in his forfeit."

" How — how, prithee ?" cried the Welshman, gulping down the emotion of his heart, which swelled with real horror at the barefaced villany of the Gascon. " If the poursuivant pe guilty of treason and witchcraft, why may not your lord try him py law in his own court, and so adjudge him to death in open day ?"

" What, Merodoc !" returned his companion, " hast thou but newly left the court, and seen the favour with which young Edward holds this Marcel, and can yet ask why the marcher does not try him by law ? Tush ! man ; plainly, because it would bring the whole kingdom about our ears, if he were put to death — beside the pains of excommunication and interdict from his father Ingulphus. — But thou dost not seem warm, Sir Vintenar, in our design — the frances have no temptation for thee."

" Hold ! Hold ! Sir Constaple — py my faith, put they have though !" cried

Merodoc, fearful, if he refused the base office, the Gascon might find some one more complying ; and, trusting to Providence for enabling him to find some means of rendering Sir Aubrey service, — “ Give me the francs, and set me my task.”

“ Thou wilt not faint nor fail ? ” said Fierabras.

“ I will neither faint nor fail, py the Holy Virgin,” replied Griffith, adding, in his own conscience, “ in aiding Sir Auprey against thy villany.”

“ Then give me thy hand — the bargain’s made,” cried Jannequin, “ and here’s thy guerdon.”

He put a leathern gypsere or purse into the hands of the vintenar, who instantly secured it.

“ Thou must hie thee,” pursued the constable, “ to the dungeon where Marcel is secured. I will procure thee entrance : — but hold — he may suspect thee, if thou have not some plausible face.”

“ Tarry not for that,” returned Merodoc. “ I wore his harness from Here-

ford hither. I can say I have pegged admission to him to enquire how he would have it ordered, and disposed, look you."

" So thou canst, by St. Roche, — a brave thought. — Come, Griffith, I see thou wilt win the other hundred francs ; this touch of thy wit deserves fifty."

" It will pe as well then, Sir Constable, if you pay them to me," said the Welshman, smiling archly, and holding forth his palm.

" By our lady, I am not worth another suskin now," replied Fierabras ; " but there are millions, my brave heart, within the castle ; play thou thy part well, and thou shalt be better paid than thou could'st hope for."

" Well, well," cried Merodoc, " that as it shall happen. Griffith Merodoc was never greedy nor craving, look you ; — put what am I to say to the poursuivant when I shall see him ?"

" Say, that thou dost seek his prison to concert his escape, and art ready to bear any message to the abbot, which thou mayest avouch to be an easy mat-

ter, under countenance of placing his horses and baggage in his father's hands. Thou mayest say so, Sir Vintenar ; but the horses and baggage will become mine own when the revel is over."

" Well, and then we form a plan for his prison-preach and escape, and what then?"

" Thou must carry thy scheme to the abbot; I will see thou hast admission to the monastery. Ingulphus and his brother Paschal will fall into the plot like fishes at a bite, Sir Vintenar ; and if thou couldest engage the hosteller, Aprisidly, to join them, the discovery would place him at my mercy, and secure me his daughter on any terms. I would give somewhat, too, to catch Hal Vernoun at fault; he would need little spurring, wert thou to say Sir Bertrand had fixed on Marcel's death."

" Py St. Tavid! a very good plot, and well disposed. Put after what fashion and manner will you bring it to an end?"

" Leave that to me, Merodoc ; thou shalt see how I will manage it."

" Put you had pest tell me all, that I

may not make any pungle in my dispositions, look you."

" Marry, 'tis as well.—I will tutor the donjon-reeve myself, and thou may'st tell Marcel he is to be bought. Horses shall be ready for all of your party, ye shall get clear off, and pass the postern, beyond which, I, with a strong party of companions, will be in ambush. Marcel, thus trapped, will fight rather than flee ; and as he and the rest will be unarmed, they will fall before my hauthoners, like the mountain fern before the scathe of the thunderbolt. Dost mark, Merodoc ? A fine plot."

" Py the mass, 'tis a nople plot ; and if, in the mêlée, I should give the poursuivant a whinger with my pavade, it would pe as well."

" As well ! It would be ten times better, man ;—thou art my second self, and would have made a brave spirited brigand as ever cried, ' Surrender ! ' to a gentle's house, or made a sortie upon the clothiers of Brittany. But come, about thy part ; the sooner it works, the better for thee and me."

Fierabras, having concluded his speech, led the way back to the portal of the fortress, and summoned the warder, who, instantly lowering the draw-bridge, admitted him and the Welshman through a wicket in the portcullis. Proceeding across the court-yard, they arrived at the keep or inner tower, where the poursuivant and his pages were incarcerated, and the Red Squire, having instructed the donjon-reeve, or warder of the dungeon, to suffer the egress and the regress of the Cambrian whenever he should apply for admission, left him to enter upon his undertaking, and retired to his own lodgings.

Conducted by the warder, Merodoc ascended a narrow stair, (the acclivity of which was indistinctly shown by his companion's lamp) and attained a small landing, or gallery, upon which the door of the poursuivant's chamber opened; another flight of stairs, communicating with the prison of Gracy and Fitz Ralph, Sir Aubrey's pages, ran from this gallery and formed a third story, being all the apartments contained in this division of

the keep. The door-way of the pour-suivant's lodging was low, and strongly cased with stone ; and the door itself, of great thickness, secured with iron bolts beyond the possibility of being forced. The bars, which were on the outside, were now drawn back ; and the warder descended the stair, leaving the door open. The room (if it deserved the name) was of very small dimensions, and entirely destitute of every article of furniture which could render it commonly tolerable. Neither bed, board, bench, nor chair were within its precincts ; and the only way in which the unfortunate prisoner could take repose, was by extending himself on the dry rushes with which the chamber was strewn. A lamp, placed in the sill of the window, threw a dim and feeble ray over the room, and enabled the vintenar to descry Sir Aubrey Marcel stretched upon the floor, by the glancing of the light upon the plates of his hauberk. His hood of mail, helmet, and balandrana, or travelling cloak, were scattered about ; and the victuals which had been brought him were entire

and untasted. From his still and motionless position, Merodoc judged he was in a stupor of grief, from which it would be cruel, perhaps dangerous, to awake him ; but the imminency of the peril, and his present chance of rendering him service, which, by a hundred unforeseen ways, might shortly be abridged, induced him to repel all considerations but the grand one of securing his escape. Emboldened by this desire, the Welshman tapped him gently on the shoulder, repeating, at the same time, his name ; but his hearing, sight, indeed all his faculties, were so deeply absorbed in the profundity of sorrow, that he had no mind nor attention for extraneous impressions. It required a loud invocation, and a hearty shake, before he could be roused from his stupefaction ; and, when he was so awakened as to recognize the person of Merodoc, he regarded him with a fierce and desperate look, and inquired, in a haughty tone, what fiend had brought him there to drag him back into the hell of recollection.

“ Fiend enow, py St. Tavid,” returned

the vintenar, “ if you knew all — put I come, gentle knight, to aid your escape — ”

“ Rather dost thou come to betray me further,” cried the poursuivant bitterly. “ By my true soul and Jesu’s great redemption, ye are all traitors that exist on earth. How camest thou here?”

“ I got admission,” replied Merodoc, “ py the help of the constaple. I am engaged to petray you sure enough.”

“ Said I not thou wert a traitor?” cried Aubrey, looking sternly in his countenance. “ Every line in thy face cries beware of treachery ! Hence with thee, caitiff!”

“ Put, notwithstanding the lines and the features of my face, Sir Knight, it is possible, had I peen the traitor and the caitiff you do hold me, I should not have peen so mighty ready to confess it.”

“ Didst thou not say thou wert bound to betray me ?”

“ I did in truth ; put I did engage in this plot, Sir Knight, to do you service. Never shall the honest name of Griffith

Merodoc pe truly pranded as a recreant traitor.”

“ What mean’st thou ? Thou art a traitor, and thou art not ; I cannot read thy riddle.”

“ Do you see this gypsere full of gold francs ?” said Griffith, in a low voice, and drawing the purse from his breast ; “ I did receive it from the constable, as a guerdon for my assistance in your petrayment.”

“ My betrayal ! How am I to be further betrayed ? I have been robbed of all that gave joy to my life ; let them take that too ; it will be a mercy instead of treachery.”

“ Py my salvation, it is a poor satisfaction to have your throat cut, after peing ropped of your all. Put listen to me, Sir Poursuivant, and I will recount, and relate, and declare to you, why and wherefore I have entered into this plot and conspiracy.”

The Welshman then related, at full length, the conversation he had held with the Red Squire ; and concluded by tendering his own services.

" I am a descendant of the ancient Pritons," he continued ; " and may therefore be suspected, and esteemed, and accounted as no feal friend and lover, look you, of a Saxon knight ; put, py my conscience, I will not fail you, while I can wield a pole-axe in your quarrel ; and so, Sir Pursuivant, you may trust me, poth py day and py night, in fair weather and foul, as your own prother."

" Were I inclined, Merodoc," said Aubrey, with a sorrowful resolution, " to make use of thy service, I know not now how it might advantage me. Fierabras would well observe we did not quit the castle till his ambush was fixed ; and then what chance of escape should we possess ? But I tell thee, honest Welshman, were the gates of my prison thrown to the wall, I would not budge a foot. My hopes of happiness are, with the hour of to-day's noon tide, vanished for ever. She whom I fondly trusted to call mine is sacrificed to a blood-thirsty caitiff, whose cruelty, like the tiger which has lapped blood, encreases with the gratification of his revenge."

"These, Sir Knight," said the vintenar, "are the thoughts and expressions of disappointed youth. The world, believe me, has yet joys, and pleasures, and happiness in store for you, if you seek them."

"What joy, what happiness, what pleasure can the world have for me, when the sun that gave life to my soul, that was the spring of my enjoyment, the spur to achievement, the guerdon of enterprise, the crown of conquest, is now set upon my fortune, and has sunk into the ocean-gulph for ever? What joy has the world for me, when, in the loves of every fair damsel and gallant knight, I shall again behold the fruit of paradise snatched by a foul demon from my trembling lips; and, in their fruition of enjoyment, shall be reproached as the base and dastard knight, whose recreant arm could not guard his mistress? Curses light upon him; he hath marr'd my soul."

In a fit of temporary distraction, the poursuivant struck the yielding air as if he had driven his dagger into the heart of his foe; but he soon became more

tranquil, though not less resolute to remain in prison.

"I will bide here," he continued; "and let the marcher consummate his crimes by giving me death. I fear it not; and the work will bring vengeance on his own head."

The Welshman, whose native obstinacy was not to be overcome by one failure, and that on the outset of his undertaking, and resolute to save the poursuivant's life, if it were practicable, though against his inclination, remained silent some time, in deep study how he might best work upon the mind of the prisoner, so as to effect a change in his resolution. Of this he had no hope without fresh and substantial argument, of which commodity, (though not scant of words,) Merodoc was unfortunately destitute; and he had nigh given up the task when he luckily bethought himself of the pages, Gracy and Fitz Ralph, who were secured in the chamber above. Observing that the young knight had again thrown himself upon the floor of the chamber, the vintenar, sans cere-

monie, took the lamp, and, quitting him, stumbled his way up the second flight of stairs, where he found a gallery and a door resembling those below. On drawing back the bolts and throwing open the door, he found the pages seated on their rushen bed, engaged in bewailing the hard hap of their lord, and mingling with their lamentations threats of vengeance upon his proud enemy. They did not seek to conceal their wrath ; but, before they recognized the person of the intruder, poured upon the marcher and all his friends, in the presence of his supposed retainer, their hearty and bitter malediction. To their surprise, they were answered by an amen, uttered in a low, cautious, and subdued tone ; but they were still dubious of their companion's honesty until he had fully explained himself, and besought them to aid him in turning the bent of their master's resolution. Willingly consenting to use their endeavours for this purpose, the pages followed Merodoc to the chamber of the poursuivant, whom they found in the same state as the

Welshman had quitted him, stretched at length on the floor. But his mind had been somewhat roused by his conversation with the Cambrian, and though he was now thoughtful and silent, he was not, as when Griffith first saw him, plunged into a stupefaction of despair. At the sight of his pages, he seemed to forget his own fortune in their captivity.

“ What !” he exclaimed, “ Fitz Ralph ! Gracy ! are ye here too ? Poor knaves ! ye have yet liv’d soft and daintily ; ye will here feel the thorns of captivity.”

“ Dear lord !” replied Fitz Ralph, “ our captivity is of little worth ; well enough content shall we be to die, if there is no remedy ; but Merodoc hath told us he has hope of escape.”

“ Use it then, and leave me here,” returned Sir Aubrey ; “ I have nougnt to escape for. Death shall come and find me at my post.”

“ Nay, dear master,” cried Gracy ; “ but if thou may’st not live for love and dalliance, thou may’st live for revenge. Think but of the moment when thy

good lance shall lay the caitiff in the dust, when proud Bayard shall prance over the fallen marcher, and thou shalt make him confess at the dagger's point his treason and dishonour. Thou hast yet, by Saint George, a bright day to win ; and thou wilt not— thou shalt not —fling it by in despair."

Gracy was a youth of sixteen years, and from his bold and forward spirit, and his affectionate assiduity, had gained the entire confidence of his master. Fitz Ralph, somewhat younger, and of a more mild but quite as constant temper, was equally his favourite ; and both were accustomed, with the familiar warmth of unreserved affection, to press before him their opinions, as if they had been kindred to his blood instead of mere retainers. Our readers will doubtless be aware that the pages attendant upon noblemen and knights were not hired servants ; they were usually youths of good family placed with their patrons as in an initiatory school of discipline and education.

The poursuivant seemed somewhat

moved at the picture of gratified vengeance set before him by Gracy ; but the loss of his Morgana, still pressing upon his heart, turned him deaf even to the thought of revenge.

“ Go, knaves!—Go, Gracy!—Go, Fitz Ralph!” he exclaimed. “ With Morgana I have lost all hope, all courage, all desire to live ; quit me, and fly with Merodoc. Ye may yet live to avenge my ruin ; but with me all is past.” “ Here,” drawing a purse from his quartelois, “ this will aid ye in your escape. Go ; and when ye shall hear the blow is stricken, and that the spirit has quitted this wretched corse, melt not in tears, but let your hearts burn with revenge. Once more, I bid ye — I command ye — to fly.”

“ And if I fly a step, but in your company, dear lord,” cried Gracy, “ I pray the Virgin I may never wear a knight’s hauberk, or a gilt spur.”

“ And if I quit thee, dear master,” cried Fitz Ralph, “ may I never see fair lady, or hear harp in hall again.”

“ Good knaves!” cried Sir Aubrey,
“ your stay cannot better my fate.”

“ We can share it with thee,” cried Fitz Ralph; “ thou shalt not want companions to attend thee in life and death.”

“ Look you now,” cried Merodoc, who was melted with this affectionate altercation; “ if you will now opstinateley, and wittingly, and perversely stay and apide in prison, Sir Knight, you will have the sin, and the shame of their plood and murder on your soul and conscience, peside your own. This young lad says very true, py maid Marian, that you may live to revenge, and avenge the treason, and the treachery, and the vile scoundrally pehaviour of the paron, look you; and it doth pecome you, as a Christian knight, and a prave and honouraple man, to punish him for his misdeeds.”

At length, overcome by the pleading and remonstrance of the pages and Merodoc, and urged by that instinctive love of liberty infixd in every bosom, and which never dies in the breast of the captive, be his circumstance ever so

painful or desperate, the poursuivant relented.

“ But how,” said he, “ is our escape to be accomplished? The jealous eye of Fierabras is upon us, and will watch us closely.”

“ Py his desire,” replied Merodoc, “ I shall impart our design to the Lord Appot — to the hosteller, Aprisidly — and the man at arms, Vernoun: all of them are well wishers and lovers to your knighthood; peside that yeoman Alan Waldeyff, and a purly friar at the hosterie ; among us, we shall hit upon some plan, and scheme for your deliverance; and you shall know it when the pot has poiled. I shall persuade the constable to make his ambush of as small a number as may pe, under the pretence, look you, that a great number would give occasion for discovery. Doubt not of my skill ; we shall have him py the nose, and he must be disposed of.”

After some further conversation, relative to supplying Sir Aubrey and his pages with arms, the Welshman took his leave, and withdrew to his quarters.

CHAP. II.

Oh ! honour, shadow of divine perfection,
What majesty thou givest to thy votaries !
Enrob'd by thee, the poorest wight that lives,
And scarcely hath a shelter for his head,
May look with scorn upon the titled villain.

Joan of Arc.

WITH day-break, the Welsh vintenar was at the hosterie of Aprisidly, attended by the hauthoner, Vernoun, whose company he had procured by telling him he had a secret to communicate to Aprisidly, in which he and many others were concerned. The hosteller and father Adrian were already up and engaged in the ceremony of breakfast, to which the latter paid more attention than he would have done to the celebration of the mass.

“ Ha ! ” cried Aprisidly, “ Vernoun ! master vintenar ! ye are here betimes. What, I wis, my double ale was so good

over night, ye would e'en taste it again this morning."

" Py my faith, no," replied Merodoc ; " you might guess till the hallidome before you found out our errand ; put where is the yeoman, Alan Waldeyff ? I would have him present at our conference."

" He lives but a step off," said the hosteller, " and I will send for him. Here, knave, hie thee to the granger's ; bid him come hither straight."

One of the huscarles, to whom he spake, instantly quitted the house, and Aprisidly, pushing from him the victuals he was about to eat, rose from his seat, and, in a tone of great apprehension, said, " Sir Vintenar, I pray thee for the love of the Virgin, tell me whether I fear true or falsely, do thy tidings touch me or my daughter ?"

" No more than they touch me, master Vernoun, or Alan Waldeyff," replied the Welshman. " Thou shalt know all anon."

They were interrupted by the entrance of Oliver Blondel, before whom

the Welshman became instantly silent, knowing him but for an officer retained in the household of the baron, and being entirely ignorant of his attachment to the daughter of Aprisidly.

"Good Morrow, Blondel," said the hosteller, "how have your baron and his lady past the bridal night?"

"God's grace upon me!" replied the minstrel, "may I never see or hear of such another. Ye are discreet men, who know the peril I run in telling ye, so let that I reveal to ye pass not your lips. In the fore part of the night, the bride-chamber rang with fearful shrieks, louder than ever did harp ring in hall or bower. Then followed a murmuring sound like the moan of a dying woman, or the complaint of an unhouselled ghost, and finally a dread silence, as if the spirit was parted; I pray'd heartily for her soul; for, in truth, I thought the fair bride was dead."

"And is she not?" said Vernoun, "I heard she was, and the story made many a man in our company gripe to his dagger hilt."

“ She yet lives ;” replied Blondel, shaking his head, “ but it were better if her fair body was now in the kirk-yard, a food for worms and maggots. She lives ; but her senses are flown.—She is stark mad.”

An exclamation of horror succeeded this account, and all present, actuated by feelings of unfeigned pity, reprobated the tyranny of her father, and the fierce passion of the marcher, which could, with heartless indifference, sacrifice all the duties of humanity to its own selfish and disgusting gratification.

“ By St. Werburgh,” said Vernoun, “ I could sooner have sworn a horse would clear Broxton Gap at a leap, than a woman would go mad for the loss of her leman.”

“ Thou dost confess thyself, dost a ?” cried Waldeyff, who, during this conversation, had stolen unobserved into the hall. “ But what hast thou summon’d me for, Miles ? Is it to attend thy daughter’s wedding to church with the Red Squire ? Thou seest I have busk’d me in my holiday-mantle and budged hood.”

" Py my faith and troth," said the Welshman, " when you shall hear what you shall hear, look you, I wis, you would fainer see pretty Joan stowed into her grave than married to the Red Squire."

" What meanest thou, master Vinternar?" said the hosteller with great emotion.

" You must pardon me for not speaking in public," replied the Welshman, " my tidings are a supject of life and of death."

" If it be this young minstrel thou dost fear," said Aprisidly, " speak out, I will answer for him."

" Put will you answer for my head?" said Merodoc, " which will peradventure pe put in jeopardy py what I shall say, and utter, and relate, look you?"

" I will answer for him, and for every man here," returned the hosteller, " as for mine own life."

" What will ye say, then," said Merodoc with impressive emphasis, " when I avouch and declare unto you, upon my conscience, that the lifes of you all are poughed and sold, and not only poughed

and sold, but treacherously and foully and heinously assaulted py that imp and fiend and traitor of France, the red constaple."

"How? where? when?" cried Vernon, setting his teeth in anger.

"Sit down, sit down," said the vintner, "and I will tell you all. Hosteller! close your door, and let us have a flaggon of your ale; sorrow makes a man dry."

Waldeyff and the rest, conformably to his desire, seated themselves around the fire: the door was shut, and Aprisidly himself, having furnished the table with liquors, sent the huscarles from the hall, and joined the company. The Welshman filled his horn and drank to his companions, after which he resumed his story, and related to them the conversation which had passed between Fierabras and himself, amid interruptions of execration, and denunciations of revenge. He also informed them of the interview he had had with Sir Aubrey Marcel and his pages; and prayed them

to join with him in meting to the traitor
the reward of his deserts.

“ That will I,” cried Vernoun, “ by
our Lady! What! it was when he tapped
thee last night o’ the shoulder, that this
spiteful hearted caitiff urged thee thus?”

“ Ay, it was,” replied Merodoc; “ we
walked away to the middle of the tilt-
ground, where no pody might hear us.”

“ And if I do not quit him,” cried
the man at arms, “ I pray Saint George
to make me the sport of women as a
craven coward.”

“ And if I do not send as good a cloth
yard shaft through his guts,” cried Wal-
deyff, “ as ever was notch’d by William
of Cloudeslie, I’ll be sworn to walk to
Canterbury with sand i’ my shoon.”

“ And he shall have another from my
bow, if it be not mouldy,” said Aprisidly,
“ as tough as ever came out of George
a’ Green’s sheaf.”

“ And if ye will find me a leaden
mallet, or a pole-axe,” cried the Men-
dicant, “ ye shall see me tuck up my
gown, and lend him a few as heavy
strokes for the honour of the church, and

his contempt of its children, as ever the curtal friar laid upon Robin Hood. I would I could do as much for his master, who is as couthful a rogue as his brigand squire."

" Though I," said the minstrel, " have but little skill or force to wield weapons, I will gaily bide your chance, and do mine assay."

" By the mass, thou shalt not, Oliver," said Aprisidly, " thy frame is feeble, and thy health but slender. Bide thou at home."

" We will not have thee with us," said the yeoman, Waldeyff, " thou canst do no good; a steel lance or battle-axe coming athwart thy head-piece would spoil thy singing. I will tell thee all after the fray is over: how my broad arrow whizz'd through Jannequin's liver; how Vernoun unhors'd half a dozen traitors with his own spear; how the friar chopp'd the brains out of twenty scops; and Aprisidly feather'd them with his shafts till they look'd like a bevy of peacocks: thou shalt have enow to make

a ballad of ten fits,* and fifty verses to every one."

"By Saint Quintin," cried Aprisidly, "there will be little safety in confessing we had any hand in the work. We must lay our plot for the night, and mark well not one of the constable's company escape: what dost thou mean to do, Vernoun, when the fray's ended?"

"By my troth," said the man at arms, "I've ridden with the knight before, and I'll now run chances with him; he has friends at court, and can help me to a service; but if he could not, I swear for Saint Charity I would back his quarrel."

"And in good truth," cried Merodoc, "I shall make my way over the porder to Pangor, where the marcher might hunt a forty year and never find my hiding; and the paron will never suspect, nor mistrust, nor doubt the hosteller, save the Red Squire has declared, and avouched to him he has sought to

* The old minstrels used to divide their ballads into parts, called by them "fits."

draw and peguile, and entrap you into the plot, which, py my conscience, I think he would hardly do ; and as for the granger, Fierapras himself does not pelieve, nor know, nor understand, look you, that he, or the holy friar, or the young minstrel, or any pody else, will join in our enterprise. Put how many of us are there ? ”

“ Tush, man,” cried Waldeyff, “ we are nothing. Thou shalt see Robin Hood and his merry men, full seven score and three ; every vassal of the church shall stand up for the son of his lord ; and one flight of our shafts will stretch the foe in the dust.”

“ If thou wilt undertake for the church yeomanry,” said Vernoun, “ Aprisidly will have no need to busk his old limbs in steel harness ; and the fewer we have to pass the walls the better.”

“ Nay, by our Lady, not so ! ” cried Aprisidly ; “ I’ll be with ye, if it be but to see that rascally squire get his meed.”

“ But how may’st thou win out of the fortress,” said Vernoun.

“ I will pass, as my wont is, for White

Kirk," said the hosteller, " and bide abroad till the morrow."

" That thou do'st never,' returned Vernoun, the warder will suspect thee on bruit of our affray: thou must e'en give up, Miles, and bide content with the minstrel; we shall be more than enow if we have twenty archers beside our company."

" And I'll be sworn by the Trinity," said Waldeyff, " our green mantles shall be thrice the number, and so hooded and masqued, as though it were a maying, that if Fierabras and his fellows escape, they shall lay no wyte to us more than to others. But what say'st thou, old burly-bones? are we to have thy company?"

" The devil speed thee for an ill-mannered churl," replied the friar, " that can show no farther courtesy to a holy friar than call him burly-bones. But, by our Lady of Walsingham, I will wend along with ye, though I never return to the fortress. Ye must find me a horse, and I will ride with Sir Aubrey as far as he goes my way."

“ Then hie thee straight to the abbey,” said Vernoun to the Welshman.” Thou hast no time to lose ; for to-night we will have Sir Aubrey freed. The lord abbot will furnish thee with money ; and with horse and arms for those who lack them. Tell him of our plot — he may perchance hit upon somewhat; for his name as a right valiant templar was higher than it is now as a lordly priest.

“ Tell him,” cried the mendicant, “ there is in your company a worthy friar, who will spill his blood like water for the defence of his son, and to avenge the disgrace put upon holy church ! — Perchance he may send me a golden rood, an opal ring, or some such like trifle. Thou may’st say I am a poor mendicant, but a tall fellow of meikle spirit.”

“ Thou had’st better go with him and tell thine own lies,” said Waldeyff, “ unless thou wilt give him full indulgence.”

“ Ay, marry, I will do either,” replied the mendicant.

“ Surcease your folly,” said Vernoun,

“ and jest when ye have time — away
Sir Vintenar.”

The Welshman, thus urged by the man-at-arms, rose from his seat, and quitted the hosterie. With hasty steps, he mounted the hill approaching the abbey from the town, and entered it without any opposition from the soldiers stationed at the porch. On enquiring at the acholythi, who, as usual, attended their functions in the church, for their superior, he was conducted through a range of cloisters to the garden of the monastery, where he found Ingulphus and his brother, Sir Paschal Marcel. The abbot, supposing him to be some envoy of the marchers, received him with a stern and haughty demeanour, whilst the civilian, with an aspect somewhat more gentle, enquired his business. This he related with an artless naïveté which dispelled all suspicions of his faith, restored the abbot to tranquillity, and to Sir Paschal Marcel communicated indescribable delight.

“ He will then escape,” said Ingulphus, solemnly raising his hands to

heaven, “ Benedictus Dominus, Deus meus, qui docet manus ad prælium et digitus ad bellum!”

“ But prithee, good fellow,” said Sir Paschal, “ tell us what ye need to perfect your enterprise? Money! horses! arms! — we can furnish all.”

“ So please your reverences,” replied Meredoc; “ for the yeomanry hath your granger, or farm-steader, undertaken. — I have for myself horse and harness, — so hath the man-at-arms, Vernoun; put there is a wild spring of a friar, who hath sworn he will join our company, and he will need poth; — as for money, the poursuivant may need it when he has passed the walls of the fortress.”

“ Now Ch—t save me,” cried the abbot, “ neither he nor any of ye shall be stinted in that ye lack. There is plenty of gold in our bursary, and we will pawn our jewels and our relics but Aubrey shall be free.”

“ What is done, Sir Appot,” said Meredoc, “ you may believe me is done for the love we pear Sir Auprey, and not for the desire and avarice of gold

and lucre. Your kirk vassals may be recompensed — and requited — and gratified for their service, look you, on many times and occasions hereafter.”

“ They shall be, by Saint Olave,” said Ingulphus; “their readiness to encounter dangers for love of my blood; shall be requited with somewhat more substantial than thanks. But for thee, who hast proved thyself a miracle of loyalty, I am at a loss to put a value on thy desert.”

“ To tell you a truth, Sir Appot,” replied the Welshman, “ honesty, now-a-days, is above price, and so needeth no reward. I should have been an accursed peast, if I could have betrayed the gallant knight, that had fed me with his victuals, and clothed me with his raiment — nigh as pale, by our Lady, as Sir Mordred, who sought the death of his uncle, the great and the blessed Arthur, King of Pritain.

The civilian, smiling at the Cambrian’s comparison, said, “ But thou wilt not, sure, refuse us the pleasure of rewarding

thine attachment to Sir Aubrey with a trifling gratuity?"

"I would fain know what it is to pe, then, Sir Knight," said Merodoc, "if it may pe an ivory cross that has pelonged to my Lord Appot, or a small ring, or any thing else, if I may pe so pold, that could be counted as a holy relic."

"An ivory cross!" exclaimed Ingulphus, "thou shalt have a golden rood garnished with jewels, my good friend; and if thou wilt accept them, a thousand francs in thy hand."

"Oh! no, no, py St. Winifred," cried the Welshman, "a thousand francs and a golden rood! no, I should have fancies and misgivings, that I had redeemed the young knight for his pody's worth, G—d forpid, G—d forpid!"

"How then may I reward thee?" said Ingulphus: "thou canst not, after this affray, come hither with thy family, or thou should'st have a farm well stocked, and become vassal to our abbey."

The Welshman was silent for a minute, as if pondering this generous proposal;

but he concluded with shaking his head sorrowfully, and replying, “ Alack, a-day! no. The marcher, bloody peast as he is, would soon harrow my farm, and destroy my three young lads ; no, or else, py my conscience, though I do love Wales as dear as my own life, I would have left the ponny panks of the Dee, and taken up my shelter with you for ever. I would have apandoned the wars, and pecome a good and an honest yeoman of Cheshire. Alack a-day ! what a pity ! what a pity !”

“ But if thou hast a mind, good fellow,” said the civilian, “ to quit thy profession, I can, perchance, help thee, though perhaps, not so much to thy liking. How should’st thou fancy the stewarty of my household in fair London ? Sir Aubrey Marcel is my heir ; and, as thou art attached to him, thou would’st see him there more often than if thou did’st remain at Malpas.”

The countenance of the Welshman graduated from its original solemnity, first to an expression of confused and indistinct understanding, then to an aspect of

severe study, and lastly, to an unrestrained and overwhelming burst of delight. Without ceremony, he caught hold of the lawyer's hand, and wrung it with the heartiness of ancient and intimate friendship ; but on a sudden, returning to his recollection, he appeared much ashamed.

" Py my salvation," cried he, " I had clean forgot every thing in the world put the stewarty at ponny London. G—d speed your honour and your knighthood ! I will accept your chain of office with a mighty good will."

" And thou must accept these," said the abbot, taking a golden rood from his own breast and a gypsere from his girdle, " for my sake ; it will please thee, perhaps, to know, that this holy rood was the corporal crucifix of St. Werburgh of Chester."

The Welshman, with great devotion, received the precious relic, than which he promised sooner to part with his life ; but the abbot could by no means prevail upon him to take the purse.

" If it so please you," said the Cam-

brian, “ I will carry it to the pied friar, who will thank you for the gold over and over again.”

“ Thou shalt do so, good fellow,” said Ingulphus, “ and give him this ring beside. Tell him, if ever he come this way, or any friar of his house, hereafter, to seek no hosterie, but make his way hither. At all times shall he be welcome for his love to Aubrey.”

The abbot drew from his finger a broad gold ring, which, with the purse, he put into the hands of Merodoc, who secured them in a gypsere which hung at his girdle. Ingulphus then withdrew from the garden; but in a few minutes made his appearance, and approaching Merodoc, drew a large and heavy bag from beneath his cope.

“ This bag,” said he, “ according to Waldeyff’s reckoning, contains one thousand francs ; I put it into thy hands, and make thee my son’s steward as well as Sir Paschal’s. Bid the granger come hither before vespers, and choose out of our armoury harness for the friar ; a horse too, he shall have from our stable. I

will that thou give the valiant man-at-arms, who, by his siding with Aubrey, will forfeit his retinency, three hundred francs."

"He will follow the knight," said Merodoc, "and trusts to him for procuring advancement at court."

"And if Aubrey may not serve him," said Sir Paschal, "by our Lady, I will, when I am at liberty to go southward."

The Welshman, having concealed the bag of coin within the lining of his mantle, and bestowed many thanks and acknowledgements upon the abbot and his brother, withdrew from the monastery. He had scarcely, however, issued from the porch, when the Red Squire, who apparently had observed his entrance and awaited his return, advanced from the barbican of the castle, and enquired the success of his endeavours. The Welshman, having his account ready prepared, met him not only with an unfaultering step, but gave him the wink, and nodded towards the tilt-yard, as if it had been unsafe to speak so near the monastery. Arrived at the spot where Fierabras first

opened his plot to the Cambro-Briton, Merodoc, with unblushing effrontery, and in the most clear, luminous, and well-arranged narrative, related to the constable his pretended attempts to draw over the poursuivant, Vernoun, and Aprisidly, the latter of whom he averred to be obstinately and indomitably bent against thrusting his head into the noose. But the abbot and his brother, as Fierabras prognosticated, had, he assured him, taken the bait more easily than he could have expected, or durst have hoped for, and had presented him with a purse of two hundred francs to aid the poursuivant in bribing the Donjon-reeve, Vernoun, and such others within the fortress, as could facilitate or defend his escape.

“Thou may’st give Vernoun twenty, perhaps fifty,” said Fierabras; “the rest thou and I will depart between us.”

“Nay, py our lady,” returned the Welshman with affected vexation, “what I get, I keep, look you; or I’m off, and you shall play out the play yourself, for Griffith Merodoc. There are fifty francs pelonging to me yet.”

"Did'st thou not say," said Jannequin, "thou wert not greedy?"

"No, py Snowdon and Penmanmawr, which are two pigger mountains than any in France, look you, I am neither greedy nor gluttonous. Think ye I do not deserve two hundred francs for my pains and service? Py my conscience, I will go to your paron, and see whether he will not give me somewhat to the boot."

But Fierabras, to whom, from his fear that the Welshman might let slip some hint of his practice upon Vernoun and Aprisidly, such a scheme was particularly distasteful, retained him by the mantle, and said, "Stay, thou mad-brained Welshman, I did but play with thee; the gold is thine own, man, and the fifty francs too. Thou art as hasty as a roebuck that has a shot in his ear."

"Pay me now," replied Griffith, "I do not like thy play—pay me now."

"I would soothly," cried the Gascon, "but by my faith, I have not—"

"Oh! very well," said the Welshman, moving off, "I am going to the paron."

"Stay, thou Welsh devil," cried the constable, running after him; "here is the gold; — beshrew thy heart — can'st thou not trust my honour?"

The Welshman received the fifty francs from the enraged constable, and, as he slid them into his purse, grinned upon him with a bitter and taunting smile; but his companion, whose wits were rendered acute, and whose spirit of revenge was restrained by the influence of mighty gain, perceived it was not now the time to requite the Cambrian for his incivility, and therefore suffered his grimace to pass unnoticed though not unremembered. It was, however, with great difficulty that he could command sufficient placidity of tone and aspect, to enquire from Merodoc at what hour he had fixed the departure of the pursuivant and his attendants from the fortress.

"There will be little stir, I trow," continued Jannequin, "if Vernoun and his squires are his only companions."

"Ay, ay," replied Merodoc; "put there are the lads, his pages; he would not put foot in stirrup without them."

“ Tut, man ! they are but lads, as thou dost call them ; the whiff and wind of my rencontre sword would drive them out of the saddle.”

“ Peradventure thou may’st pe mistaken ; those six would give any dozen of your men at arms as hearty a peating, look you, as you would wish to get in a twenty year.”

“ Those six !” cried the constable scornfully : “ I tell thee what—I will wager five hundred francs against the two hundred thou hast in thy purse, that I bring them in dead with but six of my hauthoners.”

“ Py our Lady, I give thee my hand upon it,” said the Welshman ; “ and thou hast need to fight hard ; for if the knight escape, I wis, the paron will show thee London from his gallows tree. Put I must go to Sir Auprey, and help him to prepare for march. So the Virgin speed thee to the trystal place.”

The Welshman then quitted his companion, and joined the poursuivant at his lodgings in the keep.

CHAP. III.

Back the hero, full of fury,
Sent a deep and mortal wound ;
Instant sunk the renegado,
Mute and lifeless on the ground.

Gentle River.

IT rarely happens that nature, out of respect to the circumstances and necessities of an individual, turns aside from her course. On the contrary, experience would teach us, that the more urgently our interests required she should favour us, she has, with proportionable caprice, thrown her defiance into our very teeth, and driven us to despair by an ill-timed and eccentric wantonness. It hath doubtless, worthy reader, happened to thee twenty times in the course of thy life, that when thou hast proposed to thyself a charming ride, or a delicious promenade, or a luscious siesta in the garden, the heavens, with unreasonable

distaste to thy pleasures, have frowned upon thine enjoyment, and muttered their wrath in a pelting and hissing shower or a terrific peal of bellowing thunder, to thy very great disappointment, chagrin, and indignation. If thou hast been fortunate enough to escape all these crosses; to have been favoured with fair weather or foul, frost or snow, rain or sunshine, as each agreed with thy taste, pleasure, or necessity, thou art the very minion of Cybele, and may be thankful for thy lot. But I would not have thee confidently to calculate upon the continuance of her favours. “*Dari bonum quod potuit, auferri potest:*” the fabric of thine enjoyment may be dashed to atoms whilst thou art reading my philosophy. If, however, thou art one of those ill-starred wights, whose cankered fortune “*nunquam vidit dexter Apollo,*” thou canst the more easily, and with a deeper tone of feeling, commiserate the fate of Sir Aubrey Marcel, against whom the spirits of the storm and the tempest seemed to have levelled their furies with as great malignity, as of

old they persecuted Ulysses and the Dardan Prince.

The fact is, that the Cambro-Briton had not long quitted Jannequin Fierabras, before the sun, which in the early part of the morning had cast a few red and feeble gleams upon the wintry scene, though not of potency sufficient to thaw the frost, became blotted out of the heavens by a dense, cold, and stifling fog, and this was succeeded by a heavy and unremitting fall of snow, which, in a short time, covered the ground to a considerable depth. But towards noon-tide, the wind which had hitherto been low and gusty, rose gradually into high, blusterous, and swelling blasts, driving the snow and sleet in a hundred several directions, and filling the clefts and hollows, 'till at length Æolus seemed to have untied all the bags in his cave, and the battlements of the castle and abbey rocked under the impression of the untameable breeze. The night advanced, but neither the wind nor the snow shewed any symptom of abatement: they seemed to warn all animals to keep

within their domiciles, and avoid a direful fate by not tempting their fury. To the rage of the elements was now added the darkness of night ; for neither moon nor stars were visible ; and the dim pale shimmering of light reflected by the snow extended scarcely a foot above the ground.

Such was the appearance of the night, when the hour appointed for Sir Aubrey's escape was at hand ; and notwithstanding its rigour and severity, the several parties engaged in the plot, prepared with alacrity to perform their parts. The hosterie of Aprisidly was already occupied by Blondel, Vernoun, and the mendicant friar, of whom the two latter, clad in complete harness, awaited the arrival of Merodoc as the signal of their departure.

“ By Saint George, Friar,” cried the minstrel, “ I have seen many a worse man-at-arms than thee. — If thy deeds match thy bearing, some of Jannequin's fellows may chance to rue.”

“ Thou shalt see — that is, thou shalt hear,” replied the mendicant, grasping

a heavy pole-axe which was slung around his gauntlet ; “ By Saint Francis, I will never busk me in friar’s gown again, if I do not maul some of the rascals for fair Joan’s sake.”

“ But what hast thou done with thy gown ?” said Vernoun.

“ I’faith,” replied the friar, “ I have it beneath my gambezon. It will serve to keep out the wet and cold this plaguy night. If Waldeyff and his crew of archers have to stand long in the wood, we shall find them stark enow, I’ll be sworn.”

“ Friar,” cried Vernoun, “ I saw Mero doc give thee somewhat before he left us. — Prithee what was’t ?”

“ Did he not give thee somewhat too ?” replied the mendicant.

“ Ay ; by the mass,” returned the man at arms, “ three hundred gold francs — a right rich and noble present.”

“ And he did present me with this ring,” said the friar, “ and the Lord Abbot’s blessing.”

“ Nought else !” said Vernoun.

"No, by Saint Dunstan," replied father Adrian.

"That is thy lying saint," said the hauthoner. "Swear by the Virgin."

"Marry, an thou wilt not credit me when I swear by Saint Dunstan," returned the friar, "thou wilt not if I should swear by all the saints in the kalendar; and so I will swear no more."

"Ha! ha! ha! thou art a lying loon," cried Vernoun. "Thou would'st not take a hundred francs for what thou hast about thee."

"Go to—thou art a rogue," cried Adrian, "what hath a friar to do with money?"

"Thou do'st forget thy bag of besantines," said Aprisidly.

"Ha! hush! a confession should never be revealed," said the mendicant, stopping the hosteller's mouth with his hand.

"Thou art no true taverner, if thou hast not an ear to hear, and an eye to see, but no mouth to speak, Miles Aprisidly."

"The storm waxes keener and wilder," said Aprisidly, walking to the door and listening with attention; "ye will need

good horsemanship to keep your coursers steady on their legs. How dost thou ride, Sir Friar?"

" Marry, astride to be sure, like any other man," said the mendicant: " how dost think?"

" Beshrew thee for a wild cuffer," cried Aprisidly; " I mean dost thou ride well?"

" Very well, when I am well," answered Adrian, " and not so well when I am ill. What further?"

" Marry!" cried Aprisidly, " thou art like our ban-dog; for when we take him his carrion he barks and bites all ways, so that ye cannot feed the brute backwards or forwards, right side or left; and so by thee, thou wilt not understand a plain question at any rate."

" Why then, to answer thee as thou wouldst be answered," said the friar, " I tell thee, I am the best horseman in ten counties; for when our superior rides a hunting, I act the part of braconier."

" By our Lady," cried Vernoun " thou art a holy friar!"

" Tut, man!" returned the mendicant, " dost thou not know Saint Pa-

trick was Saint George's dog-leader for many a long day? and it was never counted to him for ill."

" But where are your horses?" said Blondell. " Thy squires go with thee, Vernoun?"

" Egertoun will," replied the man at arms; " but Perrot Caspigny is ill and may bide without suspicion. Egertoun hath our coursers and his own ready barbed in the stable. Fierabras keeps the men out of the way for his own sake, and when Merodoc comes we shall soon get to horse."

" By Saint Mary!" cried the Friar, " if she would stop this pestilent down-fal and high wind, so that one could see where to bestow his thumps, I would give her ten besantines on next Martinmas tide."

" Thou art a tres-hardie knight and a liberal," cried Vernoun, " with thy ten besantines; but thou must look about thee, Friar, or thou wilt have the pour-suivant's lance bearing thee over thy horse's head."

" That would be a villainous back-stroke," said the mendicant.

" Or Griffith Merodoc's hammer of arms," cried Aprisidly, " will beat a famous clatter on thy montauban cap."

" I' faith and if he does," said the friar, " I make mine avow, I will do as much for him."

A knocking at the door put an end to their colloquy ; and, on its being opened, Merodoc, attended by Egertoun as a guide, both completely armed, entered the hosterie.

" Talk of the devil," cried the friar, " and he's sure to appear."

" It is no times nor occasions," said the Welshman, " to talk of the devil now ; come—pustle —pustle—the postern is open, and the knight and his pages are mounted and awaiting you in the tilt yard ;—follow me.—Farewell, master Hosteller ; farewell, Sir Minstrel,—speed ye."

The man-at-arms and the mendicant took a hearty farewell of Aprisidly and Blondel.

" Tell Joan," cried Vernoun, shaking

the latter by the hand, when she hears of Fierabras' death, that Hal Vernoun did his best to quit her of her suitor. He may be the prize of my lance or another's this foul night; but I will seek him, and if we encounter, one of us shall make a bed of a snow-wreath within this hour. Fare thee well; if I live ye shall both hear of me again."

" And if the Red Squire perform his pilgrimage to the devil," cried the mendicant, " I will make another to Saint John of Beverley ; but I will see ye once more. Fair Joan is not here, or, by our Lady, I would have had a smack of her bonny lips."

" Thou swearest that by our lady dost a? By my troth I believe thee," cried Vernoun : " I shall now know by which saint thou dost swear truth."

" Too many words, too many words," cried Merodoc ; " there is no time, — away, — away.

He then quitted the hosterie, followed by the mendicant, the man-at-arms, and his squire. Still did the snow and wind beat with extravagant violence ; and the

darkness, unbroken but by the shadowy gleam of a few lights within the castle, almost forbade a hope of their successfully accomplishing their escape. But, happily, fortune had now to do with men not easily daunted or discomfited by danger; to whom, familiar with death, the hazard of life was a slight enterprise; and who were only excited by difficulty to higher daring and more determined perseverance. After many slips and stumbles they reached the tilt-yard, where they found Sir Aubrey Marcel and his pages already mounted. With silent haste, Vernoun sprung into his saddle, and received his lance, target, and sword of arms from his squire, who, mounting also, took his station beside his master. The friar, with an ease which did not give the lie to his self-praise, bestrode his courser; and the Welshman, mounting his Yorkshire nag, led the way out of the tilt-yard. By good fortune one of the lights in a casement of the castle cast a faint ray upon the postern, which enabled them to clear it without difficulty; and, then, turning to the left,

they rode cautiously towards the main road, which was at the distance of two hundred yards in front of the fortress. The passage lay through the herony (which was thickly strewed with brush and underwood), and was serpentine, narrow, and uneven, the further part declining precipitously to the level of the road. But Vernoun, who knew every bank, bush, and scar within the barony, put himself forward, and moved gently down the avenue, followed by his companions, who rode so carefully and silently that, aided by the loud clamour of the storm, no one at the postern might have heard or detected their march. As the descent grew more precipitous, Merodoc, who rode at the croupe of Vernoun's horse, caught hold of his arm, and bade him, on clearing the defile, to lead them out to the right, that they might have time to form before their foes were upon them. The Welshman had, in the course of the day, leisurely scrutinised the place fixed upon by the Red Squire for the attack, and being acquainted with the whole disposition of it, took

such measures as he thought necessary for the protection of himself and his companions. He had, moreover, communicated to Alan Waldeyff the intended position of the constable's ambush, in order to avoid any mistake of one party for the other, which, without such precaution, might readily have chanced, and might have proved fatal to the hopes and to the safety of the fugitives.

At the bottom of the avenue, the ground, divested of wood, spread itself to the barriers of the fortress, and thence, with a slight declivity, into the open country, bearing a fine green-sward well adapted for the exercise of the men at arms. The constable and his detachment were stationed immediately under the walls, at the left extremity of the pathway, while Waldeyff and his archers, occupying the opposite side, were disposed within the trees of the herony. Each party awaited in perfect silence the advance of the poursuivant and his companions, whose horses, in traversing this short distance, frequently sank knee-deep in

the snow, and occasioned some trouble to their riders to extricate them. At length, Vernoun, whose experience, rather than his eye-sight, informed him they had reached the confines of the heronry, turned his course to the right, and led his companions to the firm and open field, where, under the direction of the poursuivant, they formed themselves instantly for battle ; Sir Aubrey, Vernoun, and his squire, Egertoun (all armed with lances), occupying the front rank, and the friar, the Welshman, and the pages the rear. They had scarcely assumed this defensive position, when one of the opposite party (a varlet attached to the Red Squire) drew a flaming torch from a hollow tree, where it had been concealed, and, kindling several others, threw them on the ground, where their flickering glare gave light enough to show the hostile parties each to the other. That of Fierabras consisted of about a dozen men at arms, completely harnessed, upon whom, being foreigners and attached to his interest, the Red Squire

could better rely, than upon the hau-thoners of English birth, who might have refused acting in a business which savoured more of cowardly assassination than manly and chivalrous enterprise. But, notwithstanding his apparent superiority of force, and the tried courage of his companions, the constable beheld with a daunted eye, the grim and hardy champions who were arrayed against him, and repented he had not provided such a number of his fellows as would have borne down all opposition. It was now, however, too late to recruit his company : the garrison, purposely kept in ignorance of the bloody tragedy intended to be enacted, was shut up within the castle, the warder being commanded to suffer no passage without an order from the baron or constable ; and the Red Squire was, therefore, constrained to make the best of his undertaking without further assistance. But these thoughts did not occupy his mind for half a minute : his temper, naturally bold and forward, soon recovered its confidence ; and he laid his lance to

his saddle-bow with the full expectation of victory. The distance between the parties was about fifty yards, the ground level, and fitted for such a dispute as was now about to commence. The Welshman, who perceived from the motion of Sir Aubrey's heel against the flank of his horse, that he was impatient for the encounter, leaned forward, and requested him not to move from his station. He had scarcely given this advice, when Fierabras and his companions came on to the charge, six abreast, and threatening to bear their opponents down before them ; but when they had gained the middle way between their place of ambush and the party of Sir Aubrey, they were checked by a flight of arrows from the wood, which, whizzing through the wind, dismounted half the number of the enemy, and entirely disconcerted the rest.

“ Now — now,” cried Aubrey, spurring forward, “ Saint George for Marcel !”

The poursuivant and his companions pressed forward upon their dismayed

adversaries, and, without difficulty or opposition, unhorsed every man. But the Red Squire, as soon as he regained his footing, grasped the end of his lance which had been broken in the charge, and maintained a desperate and furious combat; and by his spirit and resolution revived the courage of his fellows, who promised to perform their parts better on foot than on horseback. But they were now no match for their adversaries; the archers rushed out of the wood, and dispatched all those who were wounded by the discharge of their arrows; and, with the assistance of Merodoc and the friar, both of whom showed admirable spirit, speedily cleared the field of all but the Red Squire, who was engaged in single conflict with the man-at-arms Vernoun. The chivalrous spirit of the poursuivant, undiminished even by the treachery of his foes, would not suffer the constable to be overmatched: he forbade any one to interpose between the combatants, and watched them with an eye of sympathetic eagerness. The varlet who had

the care of the torches previous to the battle, had been shot by an arrow in attempting to escape ; but Merodoc and several of the yeomanry raised them from the ground, and enabled the two champions to press their fight with surer and better aim, and it quickly brought the matter to a conclusion ; for Vernoun, by ill fortune making a false step, the Gascon thrust his lance between his habergeon and steel pouldron, or shoulder-guard, with a stroke so deadly, that the head of the spear came out at his back. He was mortally wounded, but still undeprived of strength and courage ; and gasping for revenge, sought only to destroy his foe. With a giant grasp he caught the constable in his arms, and, abandoning his lance, drew forth his dagger of mercy, which he flourished fiercely in the air, crying, “ Now Gascon, to repay thee — die, French dog! — die, accursed traitor! die!”

With savage rage he plunged the dagger into the throat of the constable : the aventayle, or mailed hood, burst under the stroke ; and he repeated his

blows with such bitter and forceful vengeance, that the visage of Fierabras was entirely disfigured, and he fell dead to the ground without a word, a sigh, or a groan. At the same moment Vernoun fell backwards and exclaimed, “ It is finished ; — fly, Sir Poursivant. I am slain, and Waldeyff will look to me. — Fly Egertoun ; — but first come hither, knave, thou hast been a good and faithful squire. Take my courser with thee, and use him kindly for my sake. Here is somewhat for thee — keep half on’t for Crespigny, if he should recover and escape, — the rest will help thy fortune.”

He put the purse sent him by the abbot into the hands of Egertoun, and swooned upon the snow, which was crimsoned with his blood.

“ Benedicite !” exclaimed the friar, “ his soul’s in purgatory ; fly, gentlemen, we have destroyed one brood of devils ; but Legion himself may come out upon us ; to horse ! to horse !”

“ Oh !” exclaimed Aubrey, as he remounted his courser, “ that we had but

three hundred gallant spirits to mount yon castle wall ! The marcher and his band should lie as low as these men do now. But thou shalt yet hear from me, proud baron, and thy day of reckoning shall be speedy.”

The squire, Egertoun, with great sorrow wrung the insensible hand of his master, and, then, abandoning his own horse, sprang upon Vernoun’s courser, and joined his companions, who were already mounted. The friar and Merodoc had provided themselves with two of the torches, which they now made use of to discern their way upon the road, and, bidding farewell to Waldeyff and his companions, they moved off towards Hereford.

During the fight, which occupied a very short space of time, the storm had increased rather than relaxed. The wind, whistling through the tall and branchy trees of the heronry, maintained a deafening clamour, which drowned the roar of battle, or, at least, mingled the sounds so confusedly, that at a short distance, the distinction could not be dis-

covered ; and, as not a man of those who composed the ambush had escaped to bear the tidings of their mischance to the marcher, it was thought by Waldeyff that Sir Aubrey and his friends would be far beyond the possibility of successful pursuit before the discovery of the truth. In this hope, the granger and his companions, after collecting their arrows to remove every trace of their participation in the constable's defeat, prepared to draw off from the scene of action, when a hollow groan escaped from the breast of Vernoun, and he recovered his sensibility. Waldeyff, with great joy, approached the wounded man, and, raising him up, placed some of the new-fallen snow within his mouth to remove the scorching thirst which, he said, devoured him.

“ By our Lady, Vernoun,” said the granger in a consolatory tone, “ we all thought thou hadst followed Fierabras ; but, cheer thee, man ; thou shalt go home with me, and we will soon heal thy wound.”

“ Thou didst — think — then — ” said

the man-at-arms, painfully drawing out his breath, but smiling at the same time, “ that I — was — now drin—king healths — with Lucifer, didst a ?”

“ By Saint Werburgh, no !” replied the granger, “ the merry friar said a Latin word over thee, and so I held thy soul safe.”

“ God — speed him — ” said the hauthoner, “ but, Egertoun — is he gone ?”

“ I’faith,” answered Waldeyff, “ I thought his heart would have burst his habergeon as he hung over thy body ; he did wring thy hand full bitterly, and, deeming thee dead, mounted thine own distrere and rode off with the rest.”

“ Right — right — ” said Vernoun, “ when this — this piece of cold steel — is drawn — out of my breast — there is not — not a minute’s life — in my body.”

“ Tush, man !” cried Waldeyff, “ thou art yet worth all the men we have slain to night : rouse thee, Vernoun ; there is many a flaggon of Gascony wine for thee and me yet.”

“ For thee, Alan,” replied the man-at-arms, “ I wot there is ; — but for me

— for my body — there is nought — but death — death and shame.”

“ Shame !” said Waldeyff, “ what mean’st thou ?”

“ The wind is so high — ” replied Vernoun gasping for breath, “ and my voice — so feeble — I — I cannot speak — the marcher — if he finds — my body here — he will hang it o’ the gallows — dost mark, Alan? revenge — thou knowest — ”

“ We will carry thee hence,” said the granger; “ come, lads, help me to bear him into the town.”

“ Forbear — forbear — ” said Vernoun, “ if ye will do me service — dig my grave — under — that elke tree, — and let some holy monk — say over it a mass — for the dead.”

“ By our Lady of Malpas,” said Alan Waldeyff, “ die thou now, to-morrow, or whene’er thou diest, if I live, I make mine avow by Jesu Christ, I will see it done.”

The hauthoner was too far spent to answer; but he pressed the granger’s hand with a force betokening the strength of his gratitude, and guided it

to the shaft of the lance, intimating his wish to have it drawn out. But before Alan could summon up resolution to do that act which should separate the soul of his wounded companion from its mortal tenement, he was disturbed by a voice calling from the parapet of the town wall, “ Hist, Waldeyff! Alan Waldeyff!”

“ Who art thou, in G—d’s name?” replied the granger.

“ I am Blondel, thy friend, do thou and thy party fly; the marcher will be upon ye anon, with three hundred followers.”

“ By our Lady!” returned the bold yeoman, “ and if he comes, I wot we can show him some sport for his guerdon.”

“ Fly, Waldeyff, I know ye are victors; for I have seen your strife from hence; your end is gained, and another combat can serve no turn.”

“ He is right, Alan,” said Vernoun: “ leave me, and fly. They will pass me by, and thou wilt find my body on the morrow either here or on the gallows.”

“ I will rescue it, then, by my faith,” returned Alan ; “ so fare thee well.”

The advance of Du Chatelet and a large company of men-at-arms, many of them bearing torches, could now be descried ; and, at this sight, Waldeyff and his companions, darting into the wood, were soon beyond all trace of discovery.

CHAP. IV.

Deception! what deception?
If the lorn pilgrim, passing through the desert,
Should spy afar a howling famish'd lion,
And yet, God help him! have no chance of flight,
May he not counterfeit the sleep of death,
And thus avoid the loathing monster's fury?

The Lombard.

ON the departure of Waldeyff and his companions, Vernoun, extending himself upon the dead body of Fierabras, awaited, with patient fortitude, the advance of the marcher; and, as he lay with his feet towards the avenue, he could, without stirring his head, observe their progress. Du Chatelet, clad in a loose hauberk, half disguised by his mantle, and armed with his sword and dagger, pushed hastily forward, followed by two or three hundred of his retainers, harnessed in the same manner as himself. They soon attained the scene of action; and one glance at the dead bodies in their com-

plete armour, and at the coursers, a few of which were picking, from beneath the snow, a silent meal, assured the baron that his design had miscarried, and that his foe, after having slain his hauthoners, had wholly escaped. The sight of his retainers, swimming in their own blood, roused his heart to a pitch of desperate rage ; and, like the Roman Maximin, he almost howled with vexation. It was some time before he was able to govern his passion, and enter coolly into an investigation of the ill fortune which had befallen the constable ; and it was long ere he found out any clue by which their discomfiture could be accounted for. But having at length ordered his followers to examine the corpses of the dead, and to discover whether Fierabras was indeed among them, his own squire, after turning over several others, approached Vernoun and the body of the constable.

“ Ha ! these are foes, by the mass,” cried the squire, “ and right valiant men at their hands. — Who are ye, friends ? ”

He held down the torch in order to discern their features more distinctly,

and Vernoun, perceiving he could not escape detection, replied to him with a steady voice, “ John Bonnelance ! Hal Vernoun and Jannequin Fierabras lie here together.”

“ Vernoun !” cried the marcher, overhearing him, “ art thou there ? Where is thy comrade, Fierabras ?”

“ Fierabras, Sir Baron !” replied the man at arms, “ is no comrade of mine ; he lies here dead beneath my dagger stroke.”

“ What ! hast thou turned traitor ?” exclaimed the baron. “ By St. Mary ! thou diest. Bear him to the hall.”

The retainers having, with some difficulty, caught the steeds of the fallen men-at-arms, and laid upon them the bodies of their late masters, raised Vernoun in their arms, and, notwithstanding his defection, treated him with tenderness. The wounded man again swooned under the agony caused by this exertion ; and when his comrades placed him upon the hall table, they concluded, from his still and motionless appearance, and from the livid hue which bespread his coun-

tenance, that he had escaped the fury of the baron and all further torture. Du Chatelet, however, in the hope of his revival, ordered the leech, or doctor, of his household, to apply pungent stimulants to his nostrils, whereby he was once more recovered. But although his senses were restored, the thick film of death was gathering over the hauthoner's eye; his breath was drawn with greater difficulty, and his jaw, gradually dropping, half fixed itself, so as to suffer his gusty aspiration with the greater ease.

"Be speedy, Sir Baron," said the leech, "his hour is on him."

"Speak, traitor!" cried Du Chatelet, "what caused thee to desert thy lord, to join thyself to my fiercest foes, and to raise thy bloody hand against thy comrades?"

Vernoun, though in the agonies of death, smiled contemptuously upon the marcher, and, with a struggling voice, replied, "Comrades—by—the—banner of—St. George—the gallant—saint—of all—free hauthoners—I am—no—traitor.—The false Gascon—plotted

the — death — of that — valiant knight — Sir Aubrey Marcel — of myself — and many others — he fell — into — his own trap, — and sank beneath my dagger — in fair combat — as I am — a dying man.”

He had gradually raised himself upon his elbow whilst speaking ; but, overcome with the effort, he fell forward upon his breast, and grovelled with his face and hands upon the table. Several of the retainers, touched with his condition, and little disposed to condemn him for slaying the Red Squire, an action to which, in their hearts, they entirely assented, lifted him up and sustained him in their arms.

“ The poursuivant,” he continued, in a low and almost inarticulate voice, “ has escaped — thou — Sir Baron — mays’t well thank him that — stood — between thee — and dishonour. — Hadst thou — maintained — thy feud — by open force — and not — by secret treachery — I had still — been — thy feal homager — thy steadfast — and unshaken — liege-man.”

“ Treachery ! base churl,” cried the

marcher ; “ thou wouldst cloak thine own treason by accusing others.”

“ Ha ! had I — breath,” said Vernon, raising his head, and surveying the baron with a look of severe scorn ; “ I could — disclose — a tale, that — that — I am — thy victim — Du Chatelet — but — with my dying breath — I disclaim — thy liegeance — I spurn — thy power — I — ”

The death-pang struck him as he spoke : he raised his arm, and, gazing stedfastly on the marcher, breathed his last. The men-at-arms who supported him, laid the body straight upon the board, and, with almost brotherly care, drew the spear-head from his shoulder, and adjusted the limbs which the parting struggle had somewhat contracted. But Du Chatelet, to whom these signs of pity, on the part of his retainers, were by no means grateful, bade them, in a tone of vindictive malice, to abstain from showing honour to the corpse of a traitor.

“ By Saint Werburgh,” cried he, “ the vile body shall rot upon the gibbet. He

died a traitor, and he shall suffer a traitor's shame."

This threat, however, was received by the men-at-arms with a murmur of dissatisfaction, which, like the roar of the ocean, pervaded every part of the hall. The marcher's eyes flashed fire at this bold and unequivocal expression of their displeasure ; and he cried aloud, " What villain murmurs at the traitor's doom ? Would ye have him buried with honour, that has leagued with the foe of his lord, that has slain my constable, and wreaked his malice on his fellow-lieges ? False vassals ! ye think more of the traitor's fate than your lord's safety."

Though no single man durst reply to these reproaches, they yet, in a body, vented their humour, which remained obstinately bent against the marcher's judgment upon the corpse of their comrade ; and some of them, in feigned voices, at the further extremity of the hall, cried out, " Fierabras was a traitor — hang him up — the Gascon deserved his fate," and other expressions denoting

their joy at the constable's fall, and their determination not to see the remains of Vernoun indecorously treated. It was to no purpose that Du Chatelet, with his dagger drawn, sought among the crowd of men-at-arms for the concealed mimics: they were like a set of school-boys on some occasions of privileged mutiny, that, unterrified by all the horrors of birch, fool's cap, and tasking, will rather undergo the dire effects of their master's indignation, than earn for themselves a lasting contumely by revealing their comrades. At length the marcher, finding their detection and punishment beyond his power, returned to his seat on the dais, and gazed upon the wild faces of his retainers with an eye of disappointed rage.

“ Bonnelance !” he cried, addressing one of his own body squires, “ Bonnelance !”

The squire came forth from among his comrades, and advanced to the foot of the dais. The baron continued, “ John Bonnelance, thou hast been near to my person in many a foul day and many

a fair one. I have noted thee for a feal and a trusty squire. Be thou, before all others, my constable of Malpas, and see that traitor's body meet its worthy doom."

But Bonnelance, instead of kneeling down and returning thanks for this splendid promotion, as was customary, bent his eyes upon the ground, and made no reply, his countenance, at the same time, betokening a sturdy resolution, but mingled with a tinge of apprehension at the effect his contumacy might have upon his stern lord. And, indeed, the marcher himself seemed struck with the constancy of the man, who, for old acquaintance sake, could not only reject the highest office in the barony, but also encounter his own rage,—a hazard not to be slightly run.

"How!" exclaimed Du Chatelet, when he had somewhat recovered his surprise, "dost thou hesitate? Is that dead clod of more worth to thee than thine own fortune? nay, than thine own life? for, by the holy rood, either that

corpse or thine shall grace the gibbet-post on the morrow."

"Sir baron," answered the squire, stubbornly. "if I had reck'd much of life, I should not have periled it so often in your quarrel. Vernoun, till now, was ever true; his treason would bring a stain on me and every free lance in your service; but we wot he was betrayed, and the traitor was Fierabras."

"Bold vassal, thou liest!" cried the marcher.

"My Lord Baron," returned the man, sternly, "I am but thy vassal while I wear thy livery, and that may be doffed when I list."

"By my life and blood thou art a traitor too!" cried Du Chatelet, rising and drawing his dagger.

He sprang from the dais with the intention of dispatching the squire; but before he could gain the place where he stood, Bonnelance retreated backwards into the midst of his companions, who instantly closed upon him, and secured him from the baron's fury. Foiled in his attempt, Du Chatelet began to fancy

there was an organized revolt already existing among his retainers ; and, willing to learn the real extent of their disobedience, he endeavoured to restrain his anger, and to address them with an even and unimpassioned countenance.

“ Pray ye, fair sirs,” he cried, with a sarcastic smile which he could not forbear, “ answer me one poor question, — Am I your lord or no ? If I am, why dare ye thus withstand my will ? And if not, wherefore are ye here ? Come forward, John Bonnelance, and answer me, as thou dost play the orator for thy fellows. There is my glove — I pledge it for thy safety.”

The squire came instantly forward, and took up the gauntlet which his lord had thrown upon the ground. He then without hesitation, or apparent fear, replied, “ In all things but this command, Sir Baron, you are our very good lord, and we are your very liege retainers. But there is no man among your free lances that will execute doom upon Hal Vernoun’s body, for fear nor favour. We have seen him do you fair service in the

field ; and we are assured he meant you no treason in the last action of his life. Pardon him, therefore, Lord Baron."

" By St. Thomas of Canterbury," cried the baron, " ye are modest vassals."

" Thy refusal" continued Bonnelance, " will quit us of all bonds. Every man here will disclaim his homage, and discard thy cognizance."

" Ha ! do ye threaten me ?" replied the marcher, " my life is in your hands ; but though I were assured my breast would receive your daggers, yet would I not bend to your arrogant spirit."

" Fear not, Sir Baron," said Bonnelance.

" Fear !" echoed the marcher, with superlative contempt, " Bonnelance ! hast thou served under my banner for seven years, and can'st yet suspect me of fear ? No, vain vassal, with this good brand, and my back against this board, I would stand against ye all, and have no thought of fleeing."

" By my faith, Lord Baron," replied the squire, " I meant ye no wrong. If thou wert not the most valiant knight

that ever clapt spur upon his heel, I, for one, would not have brook'd thy service. But we have no will nor wish to do ye violence ; we leave ye now, Sir Marcher, to prepare for our departure. To-morrow's morn will see your garrison three hundred men-at-arms the less."

Du Chatelet, who now saw he must either sacrifice his revenge, or suffer himself to be abandoned by his most warlike and disciplined followers, chose the former alternative ; but it was with little grace that he made the concession.

" By the light of Heaven !" he exclaimed bitterly, " ye have done me wrong to put yourselves between the traitor and my vengeance. But take him hence—do with him as ye list. But my curses shall cleave to his soul if his body be scatheless."

" And I am to be constable ?" said Bonnelance, smiling.

" Ay, knave," returned the baron, who could not resist the truly English forgetfulness of injury displayed by the squire ; " thou didst deserve it for the risk thou didst run from my dagger.

But I hope thou mayst die like the Gascon, if thou can't not better guard thy head."

The hall now rang with murmurs of applause ; and, as the baron retired, he was saluted with acclamations of joy and thankfulness for his courtesy.

In the mean time, while the foregoing scenes were in enactment, one very different, though little less violent and outrageous, was performed in the bed-chamber of the Lady Blanche. The unhappy maiden, though deprived of reason, was wonderfully alive to the influence of her other senses ; and, from the time of her mental deprivation, had apparently acquired an additional perspicuity in sight and hearing. During the whole evening, she had been assailed by a teasing and indefatigable restlessness, which hurried her about from one seat to another in every corner of her chamber ; and, as the darkness became fixed, and the storm began to exert its fury, her uneasiness in like proportion augmented, and, at last, defied all the

exertions of her father (who was with her), and of her women to repress it. As if influenced by a sympathetic crisis, she seemed to be aware of her lover's attempt to escape, and, at every sound from beneath, she held up her hand as a signal for silence, and listened with profound attention. But the fury of the tempest, superior to all other sounds, prevented even the uproar of the combat from being heard by any of the castle-occupants except herself, whilst she either did hear the clashing of arms and the shouts of the combatants, or some strong vision had taken possession of her thoughts, wherein her fancy had painted a striking similitude to the actual combat. With a straining eye and gasping breath she listened at the casement of her chamber, frequently exclaiming, “Hark! hark! Hear ye not? Saint George—Saint George for Marcel! Hear ye not the clashing of arms, and the rude trampling of barbed coursers, and the wild shouts of the victors, and the shrieks and cries, and direful groans of the wounded and dying? Hark! there

again! I do not feign, nor am I deceived."

With her white hand she drew her dishevelled hair behind her head, so as to allow an open and unimpeded course of the sounds to her ear; and her manner was so earnest and intelligent that her father, somewhat moved, opened the casement and listened; but he could hear nothing except the blast of the wind, and its shrill saw through the high trees of the herony.

"I hear nought!" he exclaimed, closing the casement, "but the wild blast; and I can see nought, for 'tis as dark as a dungeon."

"Dungeon!" cried Blanche, sorrowfully, "ay, sooth ye would hold him in a dungeon that is more fitted for a queen's chamber; but he is gone," she continued with a livelier tone; "he has escaped your malice, and does now laugh securely beyond the reach of your envy. Hark! hark! hear ye not the galloping of his courser, and the loud halloos of his merry men? ay, and his sweet song to the boot."

This silver harp in royal court
Hath frequent lull'd a lady's pain,
And made her fly from revel sport,
To hear its charmed sound again.

Aloft, alow,
The notes do go,
The measure vibrates every string ;
Aloof, anear,
The notes appear,
And through the hall do gaily ring.
This silver harp in lady's bower
Hath often fir'd the virgin's breast,
And trickling forc'd the pearly shower,
Or sooth'd her heart to balmy rest.

Anigh, around,
The tinkling sound
Doth vibrate every silver string :
Now soft and slow,
Or wild doth flow,
And through the chamber gaily ring.

This song, which called to her remembrance so many happy and splendid images that were now fled for ever, drew tears from the hapless maiden. With a mechanical motion she withdrew from the casement and seated herself on the foot of the bed, where she remained for a short time, apparently plunged in a profound melancholy; but, attracted by a sound which her attendants could

hear in the hall below, she sprang from her seat and flew towards the door. It was fastened, and the key was in the possession of one of the women ; but she shook the latch with violent fury, stamped fiercely upon the floor, and shrieked aloud.

“ Hither !” she exclaimed, “ hither, wenches ! the castle is in flames — the red fire curls around my body and wraps me in its stifling embrace. — Hither ! save me, — save me ! — Florence ! Marian ! Sybill ! — the chamber is filled — the black smoke — chokes me — I am — stifled — burnt. ” Ah, blessed — Virgin — receive me ! ”

She fell into the arms of her maidens, who laid her upon the bed, whilst her father, wringing his hands, and tearing his hair, hung over the body of his distracted child, and besought all the Powers of heaven for her recovery. But notwithstanding (if we may believe the monkish historians) the age of miracles was not yet past, it appeared that the invocations of the Baron of Harding were little regarded. No succour ap-

peared ; but poor Blanche, abandoned by the infuriate demon that had raised the storm in her bosom, relapsed into a state of sorrowful dejection. She however rose again from the bed, and, supported by her women, paced slowly to and fro in the chamber, frequently stopping to listen at the door for any sounds which might come from the hall, wherein she appeared confident some matter of unusual moment was being transacted. And although the vacillating nature of her disorder led her bewildered imagination to other subjects, she yet constantly returned to this theme, which, like a mist on the mountain-head, clung unto her fancy with a tenacious attachment. The idea of fire, too, was not entirely banished from her recollection ; for, although she did not, under the apprehension of being burnt alive, exclaim as before, she yet snuffed the air, and drew up her nose, as if she had smelt a latent and smouldering ignition.

“ Florence ! ” she cried, laying her hand upon the arm of her favourite

damsel, “ dost thou not smell fire ?” and the smoke too, dost thou not see it reek and volume round the chamber ?”

“ No ; dear lady,” replied the woman ; “ I neither smell fire, nor smoke — all is safe in the castle.”

“ Marry, and it may be so,” replied Blanche, “ for I have been asleep a long time, and I have dreamed many a hideous and fearful dream. — G—d pardon us, and make us good maidens. But ’tis there again. — Paugh — how it smothers in my nose ! I shall be choked ; — open the door, good wench, and let it have way — quick — quick.”

With the consent of Sir Roger Taillebois, Florence drew forth the key, and applying it to the lock, opened the door.

“ There !” cried Blanche instantly, “ do ye not smell it now ? ’tis as strong as if the whole pile was in flames.”

Deceived by her urgency, both her father and the women at length imagined her complaint was not merely fanciful, and that at times they could perceive a strong and smoky smell, as it

might be of smouldering embers. At length, the baron ordered Florence to go down to the hall, and enquire of the domestics if they had carefully extinguished the fires of the hall and oratory, both of which places they concluded had long been abandoned by their occupants; for Du Chatelet had informed Sir Roger, as an apology for his absence, that he should be engaged on some business of importance touching the border jurisdiction the greater part of the evening, and that it was probable he might have occasion for the assistance of his retainers. Taillebois had therefore retired to the chamber of his daughter, intending to await there the baron's return. The damsel had not been long absent before she returned with the speed of a roebuck, and, catching her mistress in her arms, exclaimed aloud, “He has escaped — he has escaped — thank the Virgin !”

“Who has escaped?” cried Taillebois, starting from his seat; “who mean ye?”

“I mean Sir Aubrey Marcel,” replied

the damsel, emboldened, by the gratification it would give her mistress, above all fear of offending. “ He has slain Fierabras and five-score men at arms with his own hand ; and has got away from Malpas — I heard all from the baron’s mouth.

Blanche, during this recital, stood a fixed monument in the midst of the floor ; her cheek was by turns red and pale ; and her eyes at one moment sparkled with light, and the next were covered with an opake film which destroyed her vision. The fire of insanity seemed to vanish entirely from her countenance ; and her natural feelings, bursting forth with uncontrollable violence, produced a revulsion of spirit almost fatal to her life. Her father, taken up with the escape of the poursuivant, did not remark this change in his daughter’s malady ; but, leaving her in the care of her women, quitted the chamber, and descended to the hall for further information. He had scarcely left the room, when Blanche again swooned in the arms of her attendants,

and was by them borne to the bed and carefully attended. But it was some time before she revived: her limbs quivered as if in the agony of death; a cold perspiration, oozing from every pore, overspread her body, and this was followed by a fit of shivering, though she had been assiduously covered with the bed-clothes by her women. Her whole frame, however, on recovering from the swoon, was relieved from disorder, and to her women she appeared to have entirely regained her health and understanding. But, with the latter, it was apparent she had resumed the sense of her miserable state; for she instantly surveyed the apartment with a searching glance, and burst into tears.

“ Dear lady !” cried the tender Florence, who fully participated in her mistress’s ill fortune, “ say but you are better — tell those who would die for you that you are well again.”

“ Well ! Florence,” replied Blanche ; “ my body is a thousand times better than I would have it. Oh ! that I had never been born, or, that I were now on

the wild waste frozen and perished in the storm. But heard I not that Aubrey has escaped? the glad sound rings in my ear."

"He has! he has!" replied Florence; "and the base loon that betrayed him has fallen under his lance."

"Blessed be the Virgin!" cried the afflicted damsel, "this is balm to my wounds, and I will not despair — He may yet live to avenge my ruin on the proud marcher's head. But, holy Jesu! how shall I preserve myself from the fangs of that ruthless savage? Better had I remained in the darkness of insanity, than recover my senses to fall his victim! ha! Heaven have mercy on me."

"Dear lady," replied Florence, with the quick invention of a finished Abigail, "who, but we that only live for your service, should know that you are well again? my lord, your father, is easily guiled, and the Baron du Chatelet hath little desire to watch your sickness."

"Ha!" ejaculated Blanche, clasping the damsel in her arms, "thou art my

good, my protecting angel — yes Florence — since it may be no better, I will adopt the only mode of safety left me to escape destruction."

Thus resolved to continue an appearance of melancholy and distraction, which she purposed to retain without the extravagances of furious insanity, Blanche became calmer, and more content with her situation, and retired to unbroken slumbers.

CHAP. V.

He shope the crosse on his right shoulder,
Of the white clothe and the redde;
And went him into the holy land,
Whereas Christ was quicke and deade.

Old Sir Robin of Portingale.

A SPACE of four years, marked by few chequers in the life of the Lady Blanche, passed away without the return of the poursuivant, of whose destiny she had made many enquiries ; and, at length, through his father, the Abbot Ingulphus, she became fully acquainted with the sad vicissitudes of his fortune and the uncertainty of his fate. She learned that from Malpas he made the best of his way to Hereford, and thence to Wallingford castle, where the queen and her paramour had gone, purposing to spend their Christmas ; and had besought them, after recapitulating the dishonour done to him as their messenger, to

revenge both his and their own injuries. His suit was not only disdainfully rejected ; but he was ordered instantly to quit the court. Stung to madness by this shameful repulse, and utterly hopeless of any other succour whereby he might be able to recover his mistress, he fled in despair from the country of his adoption, and embarked as a pilgrim for the Holy Land. Since his departure, neither by word nor letter had his father gained any tidings of him ; and it was at length concluded by all but Blanche, that he was dead, or had taken the monastic vows in some foreign country. But she, with the undying hope of a true lover, still expected his return, and awaited the hour which should restore them to each other and to happiness. Her father, the Baron Taillebois, had deceased soon after Sir Aubrey's escape from Malpas, and by his death, the marcher became occupant in right of his wife, of the extensive barony of Harding, in addition to his already overgrown possessions. The king, as our readers may have anticipated, was (ac-

cording to the provisions stipulated in the treaty between the marcher and Roger Mortimer) delivered into the hands of the Earl of Lancaster, who, notwithstanding his repugnance to any further commerce with Du Chatelet, was deputed by the queen to receive Edward, and convey him to his castle of Kenilworth. Shortly after, the celebrated parliament which deposed the unfortunate monarch, and proclaimed his son Edward in his stead, was held at Westminster, and a procurator was regularly appointed by the people of England to attend the fallen king and discharge them in his presence, from their homage and allegiance. This person, accompanied by a great number of nobles, knights, and ecclesiastics of the queen's faction, came into a room at Kenilworth, where the king was placed, and the wretched sovereign having openly resigned his crown, and entreated them that they would chuse his son to sit upon the throne of his ancestors, the procurator, without ceremony, thus proceeded.

“ I, William Trussel, yn name of alle the menne of the lande of Englande, and of alle the parliamente, procurator, resign to the Edward the hommage that was made to the sometime: and from this time forward now folowing, I defie the and prive the of alle royalle power, and I shall never be tendante to the as for king after this time.”

When he had concluded, Sir Thomas Blunt, steward of the household, broke his staff and resigned his office, declaring that the late king's family was discharged.

In this summary and arbitrary way was king Edward driven from the throne of his fathers, and that warlike crown which had sat more or less steady on the brows of five Plantagenet sovereigns, was, at length, reft from the head of their weak and impolitic descendant. This event, as it gave the young Edward an opportunity of displaying his political wisdom and love of arms much earlier than, had his father retained the throne, it is likely by the course of nature he could have done,

conduced much to the glory of England, if not to her real happiness. And although many writers have exclaimed against the prodigal waste of blood and treasure in the course of this reign, and have sought to stigmatize it as the era which began that undying enmity which has agitated the two nations of France and England, yet, confessing all and more than they can allege in this respect, Englishmen must ever turn their eyes upon this period of their history with feelings of proud exultation ; for it was the era when first England was acknowledged a match for France in fight, and which gave her that high and mighty superiority in arms, which, fired by this glorious example, she has till this day maintained. And it must, moreover, be confessed by all those who are conversant with the monkish writers, from the time of the Conquest until the reign of Edward III., that our ancestors, though valiant and high spirited, were yet tinctured with a fierce and savage barbarity, which was doubtless occasioned by their little com-

merce with foreign states ; whereas, after the wars in France, the character of our nobility became entirely changed, and they were as much prized for their courtesy, humanity, and politeness, as for their astonishing valour and love of magnificence. The Black Prince, as every Englishman can tell, was not only the flower of English chivalry, as Froissart calls him, in the rugged exercises of knighthood ; but his captivating modesty and forbearance in the hour of victory to his royal prisoners, John of France and his son Philip, as it has endeared him to every brave spirit since, so to his contemporary countrymen his conduct formed an example, which, to their everlasting honour, they followed with avidity. This spirit of courtesy concurred with other causes to civilize the English nation. Poetry, which heretofore had been abandoned to the bards and minstrels, was now cultivated as a regular science, and the age of Edward III. has produced at least one poet whose renown will last as long as the language of our country. The holding of tournaments

and tilts, although exercises of considerable peril, was another means whereby the roughness of the English diamond was polished away ; for, as they were attended by knights and squires from all countries, this constant intercourse softened and refined the high and hot spirits of the chevaliers, and initiated them into habits of conciliation and regard, which the rupture of peace between their countries, and the sanguine fever of war could not wholly obliterate. From this time, therefore, may we date the commencement of our civilization, as well as the effectual march of our glory. They have hitherto kept pace with each other ; and whether they have arrived at their meridian, and are now declining, will form a brilliant subject for some future historian, but is a theme perhaps too exalted for discussion in the pages of a romance.

Edward, after his deposition, remained some time with his kinsman Lancaster, by whom he was treated with all kindness, reverence, and dutiful affection :

in fact he lacked nothing but liberty to make him a much happier man than he had ever been during the plenitude of his power ; and in this state might have closed the scene of his life contentedly but for the bloody spirit of the queen and her gallant. They saw with suspicion the kind offices of the earl to his unfortunate sovereign ; and, fearing that, moved by pity for his sufferings, or the hope of large acquisitions by restoring him to royalty, Lancaster might be induced to espouse his fortune, they resolved to withdraw him from Kenilworth and conclude the tragedy. We need not here repeat what is so well known.

“ The shrieks of death thro’ Berkeley’s roof that ring,
Shrieks of an agonising king.”

Edward fell a victim to lust and ambition ; and although for a while the murderers triumphed in their detestable policy, the horrid deed speedily became public, and earned, not only for the perpetrators, but for the instigators also, the hearty and unquenchable hatred of the

whole country. For the honour of womankind it were to be wished we could say with the French poet,

“ Honte du genre humain!
Perisse pour jamais votre indigne memoire
Et qu’ aucun monument n’en conserve l’histoire.”

The court of Queen Isabel now became the resort of all those worthless adventurers who had conscience to barter for preferment. Profligate and needy ecclesiastics, whose irregularities were a thousand-fold more heinous than those of the laymen, found an asylum with Mortimer, who was now dignified with the earldom of March, and whose example kept them in countenance: griping lawyers, ever ready for a bribe to wrest the exposition of law from its true meaning, and, in the teeth of the good old maxim, “ *quoties in verbis nulla est ambiguitas, ibi nulla expositio contra verba expressa fienda est*,” to turn the very stream of jurisprudence under colour and chicane: mercenary soldiers, dropping their blood for drachmas, and hungry courtiers swelling the train and

pageant of the favourite, were all more or less received and cherished by the queen. Very few men of name or rank were found in this motley assemblage ; and those rare exceptions who did attend the queen's court adhered to her either with the hope of further aggrandisement, or because they fancied on her downfall they should be stripped of their own ill-acquired possessions. Bertrand du Chatelet, whose craving soul still urged him forward in the career of ambition, and whose enormous power made him as valuable an ally to the queen's faction, as he would have proved a dangerous enemy, passed the greater part of his time at court, confiding his border jurisdiction to his constable, Bonnelance, and seldom making any stay at his castle when business forced him thither. Believing his wife irrecoverably insane, and yet unwilling to depart with the lands he held in her right, he forbore, even when at Malpas, to visit her, and his passion, never founded on the principle of disinterested love, subsided into perfect indifference. It is true, the

beauty of Blanche was now less fascinating than at the time of her marriage: sorrow, anxiety, and suspense had dimmed the freshness of the rose which then bloomed on her cheek; and the sea of tears which had flowed from her eyes had quenched, in a slight degree, the blaze of their lustre. But to all, save himself, that beauty which Blanche had lost in loom and freshness, was more than compensated by a delicate and languishing softness, which, rendering her more necessitous of man's protection, threw around her a more bewitching interest, and a still more amiable character. Du Chatelet, however, wholly unacquainted with sentimental love abstracted from the grosser feelings of sensual appetite, would have plucked the sweet plant, devested it of its fragrance, and tossed it to the winds without remorse; but baffled in his desires, he soon turned his eyes upon new objects, and forgot in the pleasures of mercenary enjoyment the delicious flower that would have withered in his grasp. In the meantime, the Lady Blanche, abandoned to the

company of her women and the holy father Ingulphus, to whom she intrusted her secret, passed her days in actions of charitable munificence, and in discoursing with the abbot of his son's fate. Sometimes they were joined by Sir Paschal Marcel, who, at stated periods, visited his brother, and reported such tidings of his absent nephew as by the most diligent enquiries he had been able to procure. The persons from whom he commonly derived his information were the vagrant pilgrims and mendicant friars, who, for the sake of the liberal reward he bestowed on such as brought him intelligence, were ready to give him the most positive assurances that they had seen the poursuivant at different times and in different places. A gray friar, who, as he said, had made a tour of twelve pilgrimages, in Germany, asserted he had seen Sir Aubrey Marcel at Ghent, where he was preparing to join the Teutonic knights in their croisade against the Prussian Pagans; but, in direct contradiction of this assertion, a Carthusian monk averred that on his

return through Padua from the Holy Land, whither he had been in completion of a vow, he had spoken with a Benedictine in the convent of St. Giovanni in that city, who assured him that he was the long lost poursuivant, and caused him to swear upon the holy rood, that he would bear tidings of his fate either to his father or his uncle, whose residence he had pointed out to him. A third, a Dominican friar, more impudent than the other two, said,

“ He was late come fro’ his voyage,”

to Saint Jago of Compostella; and that, having a desire to see the magnificence of the Alhambra and the Moorish court of Greneda, whereof he had heard a miraculous account, he had bent his steps thitherward, and, among the crowd of emirs who surrounded the throne of the Spanish caliph, had descried the face and figure of Sir Aubrey Marcel, whom he knew, both in France and England; and that it was his wish and intention to have visited the apostate knight, and to

have attempted his reconversion ; but the jealousy of the Moors, who had him constantly under surveillance, defeated every attempt he made to accomplish that desirable object. At length, these, and twenty other tales equally fabulous and contradictory, rendered the civilian suspicious of every account he received ; and though he was unwilling to reject any information which might by possibility lead to his nephew's discovery, he yet judiciously sifted the intelligence before alarming the hopes or fears of the abbot, by which precaution, Ingulphus, and in consequence, Blanche also, were saved many a bitter disappointment. But although the abbot (as we have before remarked) had concluded, from the want of all reasonable and satisfactory intelligence, that Aubrey was dead, or had entered into some foreign religious house with the intention of utterly secluding himself from his friends, yet he was unwilling, by a communication of his fears, to destroy at once the hopes of Blanche ; and, therefore, pursued the investigation with the

same vigour and unremitted diligence as before. To his brother, however, he made no secret of his apprehensions, and found that Sir Paschal's suspicion of Aubrey's natural or civil death, was still stronger and more fixed than his own. From several knights who had made the great pilgrimage to Jerusalem, (and among the rest Sir Raimonnet de la Folie,) of whom the civilian made every inquiry, he could gain no more information than from the vagrant pilgrims who had so much and so frequently deceived him. They were now, therefore, in the situation of mariners, whose vessel, shattered and water-logged by the storm, and bereft of masts, sails, and rudder, are obliged to drive with the current, and catch at those adventitious helps which fortune casts in their way. The despondency which seized upon Ingulphus and his brother, threatened to be of serious consequence ; for the former grew melancholy, reserved, and abstemious ; whereas, he had ever been before perfectly cheerful and open, a gay companion, rather

an epicure at table, and a right jovial abbot in the use of wine ; and Sir Paschal, whose love for his nephew was equal to that of his father, grew so peevish and crabbed, that our old friend Merodoc, who was now installed in his office of major domo, and was entirely devoted to his master, had need of all his patience and philosophy to bear with his temper. We beg our reader will not hence infer (what we have no desire to insinuate) that Sir Paschal had drunk of the Lethean stream, and forgotten the services of the Welshman ; he still entertained a grateful sense of Merodoc's fidelity, honesty, and valour ; treated him on the footing of a relative or high retainer, rather than as a domestic servant, and improved his fortune by every means that occurred. And although the frequent moroseness of the civilian might, at times, exalt the Welsh blood of Griffith above its natural temperament, and induce him to sigh for the farm and vassalage of Malpas Abbey, yet, the moment of irritation past, he not only forgot the cause of his anger, but served his master with

a tenfold assiduity and affection. But even this temporary alienation of kindly feeling existed only during Merodoc's ignorance of the cause which embittered the temper of his lord ; for he no sooner became acquainted, by means of some expressions which fell from the civilian in one of his fits of complaint, that he had abandoned all hopes of Aubrey's return, whereby Merodoc perceived the sad and desponding state of his mind, than commiseration and respect banished every other feeling from his breast, and he offered to make a pilgrimage himself over Europe and those parts of Asia and Africa, resorted to by the Christians for the discovery of the poursuivant. From this moment, although his offer was refused, the steward increased in the favour and confidence of the civilian, who, touched with the zeal which should urge a man to so hazardous an undertaking, ever after restrained before him his misanthropy, and confided to him his sorrows. But Merodoc, whilst there was a possibility of Sir Aubrey's existence, was unwilling to abandon hope, and used such

sound and forcible argument, whereby he contended it was both sinful and unmanly to sink into despair, and that God had implanted hope in the breast of man, as a sustaining staff in the hour of tribulation, that the civilian was again awaked to the flattering expectation of his nephew's return, and renewed his search with redoubled vigilance. Urged by his desire to aid his master in the inquiry, Merodoc set off for Coventry, at which city the convent of pied friars, whereto brother Adrian belonged, was situate, as he had learned from the mendicant in their journey southward with Sir Aubrey Marcel, at the time of his escape from Malpas. The Welshman, catching at every twig which could afford a shadow of intelligence, imagined Adrian, as a brother of the mendicant tribe, might have some clue already to the retirement of Sir Aubrey, or might be better enabled than a layman, to make discoveries among his brethren ; at least, to extract from them a true and unbiased statement, as, from him, they would have no expectation of a reward to dazzle

their eyes and drive their imaginations astray. But on his arrival at Coventry, he found the worthy brother, as usual, abroad on a limitation of pilgrimage, and his superior could by no means tell whither or in what direction, within a circuit of two hundred miles, the mendicant had directed his steps. Thus disappointed, the steward, after leaving a strict charge with the superior of the convent on the nature of his errand, backed by a pecuniary donation, and desiring him to make the necessary inquiries of the absent brother on his return, taking care, if any thing important should be known to him, to send it by a messenger to the civilian's in Southwark, took his leave, and rode homeward, cursing the errant spirit of the mendicant, which should have led him abroad, when his presence was so needfully required. Thus did matters hang, without Sir Paschal receiving any notification from Adrian or his superior, or any intelligence of his lost nephew, and his heart, which had been buoyed up by the arguments and exertions of the Welshman, now again gradually sank

into a melancholy relapse ; and his person, wearing under the pressure of cankering sorrow, daily grew more feeble, more delicate, and fragile. His house became his prison, and, except within his garden, which sloped down to the silver Thames, he never enjoyed the benefit of pure air, or the mid-day sun.

CHAP. VI.

“ Now, Christ thee save,” said the gray brother ;
“ Some pilgrim thou seem’st to be—

* * * * *

O ! come ye from east, or come ye from west,
Or bring ye reliques from over the sea ;
Or come ye from the shrine, of Saint James the
divine,
Or Saint John of Beverly ? ”

The Gray Brother.

AN evening in the month of September, Anno Domini 1330, found the Welshman, Griffith Merodoc, attended by a varlet, within a few miles of Malpas. The day had been hot and sultry beyond the usual temperature of the month ; and as the sun drew towards his declination, and began to disappear behind the Welsh hills, the atmosphere proportionably darkened, became dense, and menaced the travellers with a storm. And though the Welshman and his attendant put their horses forward with the hope of reaching

their destined haven before the commencement of the tempest, the darkness increased so fast, that they were constrained to draw up and ride more gently, lest, in their haste they should gallop against the trees or pitch over a precipice. But this obscurity was soon removed by long and vivid flashes of lightning, which illuminated the whole country with a blue glare, and were followed by claps of thunder so loud and reverberated, that they astonished the Cambrian and affrighted the varlet. The latter, after riding a short distance, fearful every moment of falling a victim to the forked bolt, reined up his palfrey and protested he dare not ride a pace further; and before Meredoc had time to urge him onward, turned his horse's head, and quitting the road, galloped into the thicket of a wood which skirted their path. Thither the Welshman followed him, and used arguments, persuasions, and even threats, without effect, to induce him to go forward.

“ Py the faith of my pody,” cried Meredoc, “ thou art a silly knave, to

pide here under the green leaves where the lightning is most like to come."

" Nay, by the mass, Sir Steward," replied the varlet, " it is better to have some shelter than none; and the lightning must strike the strong tree before it can scathe us."

" Thou art an ass and a mule," cried the Cambrian indignantly, " and thy folly and ignorance do show that thou hast never peen peyond London pridge pefore."

" Marry, then, Sir Steward," replied the man, " my folly and ignorance, saving their grace, lie woefully; for many's the good day I have followed Sir Paschal to the hunt in Windsor Forest and elsewhere. But hark ye! the rain is coming down right dismally."

" Then thy fear is over, and we may put forward," returned the steward, " for it will not rain and lighten poth at once, look you."

" Nay, marry. I'll wait here till the storm's over," replied the varlet: " there's little jest in getting wet to the skin."

" Little jest!" repeated the Welshman

with the most decided scorn, “ thou art a dainty knave with thy delicate skin ; put if thou dost not move out, py the preath, that is in my pody, I will anoint thy hide with my riding staff.”

The varlet, with great reluctance, pricked his horse towards the road ; but he had no sooner got from beneath the shelter of the trees and encountered the storm, than he resolved to abide the effects of the Welshman’s anger rather than the rage of the tempest. With this determination, he turned his horse sharp round, and recovered his position in the wood, crying out, at the same time, by way of apology, “ Let him ride that can ; but I’ll neither be burnt by lightning, nor drowned with the rain, by our Lady.”

“ Then thou would’st prefer, and choose, and elect,” said Merodoc deliberately, “ to pe cudgelled to death ; for one thou shalt pe, as I am a Welshman porn.”

“ I would not have thee lay thy cudgel on me, Sir Steward,” returned the varlet, “ I am Sir Paschal’s vassal, but none of thine.”

“Thou art under my government and leading, art thou not, Sir Knave?” said Griffith with a sneer.

“I am on my lord’s business,” replied the man, “and follow thee for his need; but I will brook no blow but from himself.”

“What think’st thou of that?” cried the Cambrian, accompanying his interrogatory with a sound buffet over the head with his riding-staff.

“By our Lady, I will repay thee,” cried the man, laying his hand upon the hilt of his sword. But before he had time to draw it from the scabbard, Mero doc belaboured him so lustily and continually about the head, back, and shoulders, that instead of thinking of revenge he was constrained to beg for mercy. The Cambrian, however, whose spirit had been piqued by the fellow’s question of his authority, was in no hurry to listen to his apologies; but continued with redoubled application to bestow upon him the *argumentum ab manu*; till the varlet, unable longer to abide the storm, roared aloud and galloped deeper

into the wood. At this moment, a man, darting from a thicket, stood before the Cambrian, armed with a long staff, and seizing his horse by the bridle, demanded in a fierce tone whither he had conveyed the person whose cries had drawn him to the spot."

" Whither I have conveyed him!" replied the steward, " py Saint Winifred he has conveyed himself, a lousy hind ; put what is it to thee, friend? Cannot a gentleman peat a knave for contumacy and mutiny and rebellion, look you, without peing questioned and interrogated py every idle loon? Go your way, go your way, if you would not taste of the same fare."

" Pardon me, good friend," replied the stranger, who seemed to be satisfied by the explanation of the Cambrian, " I feared a worse design from the cries of your servant. But my habit, as thou may'st see, gives me privilege even of stepping between the wrath of lord and vassal, of master and servant. For the love of Christ, thy master and mine, lay aside thine anger."

The Welshman, whose curiosity was aroused by this address, could indistinctly perceive, on examination, that the speaker was habited in the dress of a palmer or pilgrim who had made the voyage to Jerusalem, a character at this time held in potent estimation and respect. With great submission the Welshman replied to him:—

“ Py Saint Tavid, Sir Palmer, I crave your pardon, but I deemed you one of those saucy Jacks that are fonder of minding other folk’s matters than their own. Put whither do’st thou journey? this is a wild wood and of pad credit.”

“ I travel towards Malpas,” replied the palmer, “ to pay my vows at the shrine of Saint Mary.”

“ Cockes bones!” cried Merodoc, “ I wend thither also, and shall pe right glad of thy company. The storm has spent its force, and that knave, who would not pudge a foot, look you, for fear of the lightning and the rain, will now have no plea, nor excuse, nor apology. Ho, varlet! Walter!”

It was some time before the man would

answer to the reiterated calls of the Welshman; but at length, observing that he was not alone, and resolving to use his spurs upon occasion, he came forth from the wood. The rain had now ceased, the sky cleared, and the moon, showing only a slight crescent, peeped, at intervals, from beneath the masses of dispersing clouds which rolled athwart her surface. The branches of the trees, beneath which the Welshman and his companions had sheltered themselves during the tempest, were so leafy and thickly interwoven, that they had escaped almost without a spot upon their garments ; but the continued plash of the dropping rain from one branch to another, and thence to the ground, and the rushing roar of a stream which intersected the wood, and was now much swollen with the accession of water, gave them a clear conception of the violence of the hurricane. It was with some difficulty, too, that Merodoc and his varlet got their horses into the beaten path ; for at every pace they slipped upon the wet greensward, and the palfrey of the

Welshman more than once came down upon his haunches. But, at length, having surmounted this obstacle, they gained the causeway, which, to their infinite mortification, they found little better than the open field ; for, as this was not a Roman way, and, as our ancestors had not yet attained the art of constructing roads with any great order or solidity, (being in fact nothing more than loose stones and logs of wood beaten into the bare heath,) they were liable to be forced and broken up by the swelling of any water, or the falling of any great rain. Their progress, therefore, was uncommonly slow, and gave the steward an opportunity of perfectly observing the palmer who walked silently by his side. He was clad in a white gown reaching to the knees, upon the left breast whereof was affixed a large cross of green cloth, and his hood, which was drawn closely over his head and face so as to conceal his visage, was decorated with the like emblem. At his back hung his hat escalloped and wreathed with a chaplet of palms, “ en signe d'avoir combatu

les infidelles come il l'avoit vove," as Mons. Claude Malingre, in his Antiquities of Paris, explains the bearing of those mystic branches ; and, in his hand, he bore a rude staff, surmounted with a cross garnished with palms also. His waist was girt with a cord, to which was attached his rosary, the gaudes of which were of unusual magnitude ; and on his feet he wore the round boots appropriate to the monks of the Benedictine order. Deep humility and unaffected charity seemed to be implanted in his breast, without any leaven of that haughty sanctity commonly seen in those who had visited the Holy Sepulchre. As they journeyed onward, the Welshman, desirous of gaining intelligence of Sir Aubrey Marcel through any channel, resolved to enquire whether, during his travels or his sojourn in Palestine, the palmer had seen or heard of that valiant knight. But, unwilling to launch abruptly into this question, with an artful indirectness he said, " I wot, Sir Palmer, you have travelled far."

The palmer made no verbal reply, but silently bowed his head.

" You have been in France, Spain, Italy, and Germany, I trow," continued the Welshman.

" I have," returned the pilgrim.

" And to the Holy Land, if one may credit those blessed palms," said the Welshman.

" And to the Holy Land have I been also," replied the palmer.

" Thou would'st then see the holy sepulchre of God," cried the steward, " and the place of his martyrdom."

" Before the sepulchre," cried the palmer sternly, " did I offer up my harness, red with the blood of Saracens. At the golgotha did I say my invocations thrice over upon this rosary : Christ died for me, I have fought and prayed for him."

" And in thy warfare, holy palmer," said Merodoc, trembling with apprehension, " didst thou ever hear a name dear to many a one in England ; the name of an ill-fated but gallant knight, Sir Auprey Marcel?"

Some time elapsed before the palmer answered his question ; and it appeared to Merodoc that he was studying to recall the name to his remembrance. At last, in a low and muttering tone, he replied, “ I have heard of Sir Aubrey Marcel, commonly termed Le Pursuivant d’Amour, if that be he ? ”

“ The same, the man I speak of,” returned Merodoc hastily : “ what know’st thou of him ? Where didst thou hear of him ? ”

“ I know nothing more than this,” returned the pilgrim, “ that he fought with honour against the infidels.”

“ Thou hast seen him then,” said Griffith.

“ I have.”

“ And he is still alive ? ”

“ For aught I know.”

“ Nay, put thou wilt swear that thy tale is sooth,” cried Merodoc ; “ for so many of thy prethren have said, and resaid, and unsaid, and gainsaid the account thou hast now given me, that his father, the Lord Appot Ingulphus, and his

uncle, Sir Paschal Marcel, are nigh mad with anxiety, and suspense, and doubt, look you."

" By Saint Mary, I mean sooth," replied the pilgrim ; " but sayest thou Ingulphus is ill ?"

" Ill ! quotha ?" cried the Welshman, " the Lord Appot, who used to pe as merry as a lark in a spring morning, and as round as a Gascony tun, is now as sad as an owl at Candlemas, and as lean as a heron."

" And Sir Paschal, thou sayest — "

" Is worse than his prother ; for till this summer, Sir Palmer, he hath not missed peing at Malpas on Lammas-day ; put, Heaven help the knight, 'tis like he will never ride so far again."

" And wherefore ?"

" Why, Sir Palmer," continued the steward, " he hath out of all reason, and against all the arguments and persuasions I could urge upon him, apandoned the hope of his nephew's return ; and what with his fretting, look you, and the infirmities of his pody, he hath fallen away to a lance-shaft, and is now unaple, God

pless him, to quit the house, that is to say, the house and garden upon the pank of the Thames, look you, a right fair and delightsome mansion.”

“ And he hath sent you hither in his place?” said the palmer.

“ Marry, thou art i’ the right,” replied Merodoc, “ to me pelongeth the honourable station of house-steward in his family, a place of no small trust and significance. Put thou wilt see the Lord Appot anon, for yonder are the towers of the appey and of the castle lifting their plack sconces into the high Heaven like a pair of giants, and threatening destruction to the infidel or enemy, look you, in soul and body.”

In a few minutes they reached the barriers of the town, and were instantly admitted by the warder, to whom Merodoc intimated his mission to the abbot. But the Welshman and the palmer, instead of making their way to the monastery, turned to the right and sought the hosterie of Aprisidly. On arriving at the door, the steward dismounted, and, giving his bridle-rein to the varlet, led

the way into the house, followed by the pilgrim. On the first glance, Mero-doc could have sworn he had awaked from a dream, and that the four years which had passed over his head since he had stood beneath Aprisidly's roof-tree were but a space of his fancy's creation ; but a second convinced him there was a material change in the state of the family. On the bench beside the fire, although summer was not yet passed, sat the hosteller himself, accompanied by the minstrel, Alan Waldeyff, and that vagrant friar, Adrian the mendicant ; Joan, at a short distance, paid attention to some culinary operations which were performed by a number of female hus-carles beneath her superintendance ; and the whole air, disposition, and order of the household seemed in every particular the same as when he bade them farewell on the night of Sir Aubrey's escape. But, on a narrower scrutiny, he found Aprisidly to look somewhat older, and that he was, besides, burdened by a little urchin who sat upon his knee, and played with the cord which attached his mantle,

whilst another clung to the kirtle of Joan, whose colour was not so fresh and blooming as when Merodoc quitted Malpas.

They received the honest Welshman with transports of unfeigned joy, and Waldeyff was so eager to testify his satisfaction, that he nearly wrung off several of the steward's fingers, who roared and danced with pain.

"Pize o' thee!" cried Waldeyff, "thou hast grown dainty with going south. But how art a man? Tell us how thou hast fared, and how the world wags with thee? Here Joan, more wine, wench; Dost see? Joan's fast at the long run, and these are her knave-bairns. Oliver's king o' the cole at last."

"Ha! thou vagapond friar!" cried Merodoc, "art thou there, when I have been seeking thee over all England? Where hast thou put that pegging face of thine own this month and more?"

"Marry!" replied Adrian, "thou wouldst have found me soon enough hadst thou hit on the right place. But whither didst hunt for me?"

" At thy convent in Coventry," replied the steward, " where thy superior knew no more of thy ways, than peeping Tom."

" That's like enow," returned the mendicant; " for I take my limitation without any chart of itinerary; and I love to be i' the north at Saint Peter ad vincula and Lammas, for then ye are full of sports, and feasts, and jovial merriment. But sit thee down, Merodoc, and tell us, prithee, what didst seek me for?"

By this time the palmer had, unobserved, taken his station at the further side of the fire-place, whereby he was almost entirely screened from the rest of the company, and having, in a low tone, ordered such refreshments as he needed, partook of them quietly in his secluded seat. Merodoc, seating himself by the side of Blondel, now commenced an attack upon the provisions, with which, by the care of Joan, a board beside him had been provided; bestowing upon his friends an odd word or two between whiles. But it was not until his hunger

was partially appeased that he had time to answer the question of the mendicant ; and when he did so, it was in the most laconic manner.

“ I sought thee to learn if thou hadst heard aught of Sir Auprey Marcel.”

“ Heard aught ?” replied the friar, “ why I have seen him a hundred times.”

The pilgrim ceased eating, and, raising his head, leisurely surveyed the man who uttered this declaration. Merodoc also discontinued his meal, and leaning half way over the board, exclaimed, “ Where ? when ? either thou liest like a friar as thou art, or there is one in this company has no fellow in thine own craft.”

“ By Saint Dunstan I tell ye,” returned Adrian, “ that I have seen Sir Aubrey Marcel a hundred times, seen him, spoke to him, ate and drank with him.”

“ Ay, but when ?” said Waldeyff.

“ When ? within these thirty days,” cried the friar, “ he is turned eremite.”

“ And his cell is —” cried Blondel.

" Ha ! that's another thing," replied the mendicant ; " he hath sworn me to secrecy, and I would not reveal his counsel for twenty — at least for ten besantines."

" But he is alive, well, and in England ?" said Merodoc.

" Sir Steward," answered the mendicant, " I will insure thee for a handful of francs."

" Ho ! Sir Palmer," cried the Welshman, " what say'st thou to this ? dost thou confess thyself an impostor, or is this friar worthy of the tumprel for his lies and perjuries ?"

At this address of the steward, the friar and his companions turned about, and for the first time observed the dress of the solitary guest, who, without replying to the question of the Welshman, calmly resumed his meal. But the mendicant, willing to inform himself of that which the palmer knew of Sir Aubrey, rose from his seat, and, crossing over to the side at which the pilgrim sat, took a place beside him, and without ceremony said, " Then thou hast been at Jerusalem, Sir Palmer, and hast seen the poursui-

vant there, or thou wouldest have us believe so?"

The pilgrim gazed upon the face of the friar from beneath his hood, but made no reply, and turned away.

"Ha! thou art dumb-stricken art a?" cried the triumphant mendicant. "I ween'd thou hadst been a hardy champion, and would'st have sworn through a donjon wall: 'tis well thou art so modest."

"The holy brotherhood," said the palmer with a stern voice, "may well criticise the fabulist, but with modesty, Sir Friar, or truth, they have nought to do; pass thou thy way."

"By Saint Basil," cried the friar, after a deep aspiration, "I wot thou be'st some lordly Benedictine, that affects penance and mortification, the better to back thy pride and insolence. But this, Sir Monk, is a public hosterie: we are all here hail, fellow, well met."

"Keep to thy consorts, then, Sir Mendicant," returned the pilgrim: "thou and I have nought in common."

"Yea, a white cloak," replied the friar, seizing the palmer by the breast;

but, to his great surprise, as his hand struck upon the gown, something beneath returned a hollow sound, as if the wearer had been privily armed with cuirass or hauberk. The mendicant drew his hand back, with a countenance equally alarmed as he would have been had he trod upon a serpent, and, though a bold man, trembled in every limb.

“Thou dost seem alarmed,” said the palmer; “but fear not, I wear a hauberk beneath my gown for penance only: I am else unarmed.”

“By the mass,” cried the friar, relieved from his apprehension, “I expected a knife in my weasand before I could cry help; but who art thou, Sir Palmer, and whence dost thou come?”

“I am a man of sorrow,” replied the pilgrim, “and, like the accursed Jew who spat upon the Saviour, on this earth have I no refuge or abiding place.”

“But hast thou, indeed, seen Sir Aubrey Marcel?” said Waldeyff; “for the love of Christ, Sir Palmer, repeat to us thy tidings.”

“I have seen him both in Greece and

Palestine," replied the palmer. " We fought side by side against the Saracens."

" Then did ye win fame together," cried Blondel; " for the gallant poursuivant bore victory at the point of his lance."

" But what hast thou to answer in support of thy tale about the eremite?" said Aprisidly to the mendicant. " If the palmer says sooth, thou art the falsest knave that ever wore cord for his girdle."

" And how red'st thou that?" said the mendicant: " it may have been a year, or two, or three, since this holy pilgrim saw the poursuivant in Palestine; and by Saint Olave I say not I saw him above half a year back."

" Thou wilt not swear by the Virgin," said Waldeyff, " that thou hast seen him since hokeday."

" Marry, not I," replied the friar.

" Nor since Midsummer," said the granger.

" I will fix no time," returned the mendicant.

" Nor since —"

" I tell thee, I will not swear at all," interrupted Adrian ; " and after all, the thought that I had seen him might have been a mere vision and fanciful deception. To all holy men the devil doth now and then play such tricks, as I wot, holy palmer, he hath full often done to thee."

The palmer arose without making any reply, and, taking a lamp, was conducted to his dormitory. He had not long left the hall, when Blondel, rising also, said he had business at the castle, and, promising a speedy return, left the hosterie. The remaining guests drew closer to each other, and, replenishing their flaggon with wine, prepared to drown in the wassail-bowl all thoughts but those of enjoyment. But they had scarcely time to commence their orgies, and Merodoc to drink success to the Hosterie Cross, (the sign of Aprisidly's house,) when the minstrel returned, and enquired for the palmer's chamber.

" Why, what dost thou want with the palmer, Sir Minstrel?" cried the friar : " thou art not sure going to sit at his head, and lull him to sleep with a border ditty ? may be thou would'st pump out

of him some foreign romance or Moorish ballad ? the death of Roland, or the exploits of Gayferos and Brandimarte?"

" Or of some outlandish friar Tuck," said Waldeyff, " that could drink and lie like a whoreson mendicant."

" Alan Waldeyff!" returned the friar, " good wild bursten churl ! thy paltock is an ell too wide ; and if thou dost not take it in thou wilt be infallibly damn'd *ad finem temporis.*"

" Fine tempered ! Ay, that am I," cried the granger ; " a gentler lad never stepped in shoe-leather than I am."

We shall, however, leave this interesting subject to be discussed by the granger and his companions at their leisure, whilst we, attending the minstrel, enter the chamber of the palmer who was engaged in telling his beads with solemn devotion. When he had concluded, Blondel informed him that the Lady Blanche had a desire to see him, and to make enquiries concerning his pilgrimage ; at which summons he seized his staff, and, following the minstrel, proceeded to the castle.

CHAP. VII.

Yet stay, fair lady, turn again,
And dry those pearly tears,
For see, beneath this gown of gray;
Thy own true-love appears.

Friar of Orders Gray.

THE palmer was conducted by Oliver Blondel to the oriel-chamber of the castle, where Blanche, seated on the dais, and attended only by her favourite damsel, Florence Merrick, impatiently awaited their appearance. The pilgrim bowed low to the salutation of the lady as he entered the room, and seated himself upon a chair which had been placed for his occupation at a short distance from the dais.

With feelings of profound sorrow, the unfortunate Blanche gazed upon the palmer; and they were little ameliorated by the tidings, which Blondel had communicated to her, that he had seen her lover; for although the latent and linger-

ing hope that he would still return clung to her heart, she had been so frequently deceived by the spurious intelligence of the cruel and covetous, that all expectation of hearing from him through a foreign medium was nearly destroyed, and the sight of him alone could have restored her to joy and confidence. A considerable space elapsed before she could “screw up her courage” to the task of questioning the palmer; and when her resolution was fixed, her utterance became so much impeded by broken sobs, accompanied by a torrent of tears, that she was forced for a while to desist, and await the evaporation of her grief. By an energetic effort she at length regained her self-possession, and collected her faculties, gradually attaining that exalted and half masculine spirit which was natural to her character, and which, had she been troubled with no other concern than her own fate, would have set her above the reach of ill fortune, and have made her alike despise the force and the artifices of man: as her spirit grew more determined, the tone

of her voice, forsaking the weak and piping treble of a woman, assumed a round, voluminous, and tenor key, befitting the solemn enquiry she was about to enter into.

“Sir Palmer,” she said, in a tone which showed some tinge of recollection regarding those impostors who had amused her with false tidings, “thou art here, in the face of God, who will know whether that thou dost utter be true or false, and will mete to thee thy guerdon; answer me, I beseech thee, as thou wouldest deliver confession to thy pardoner, without excess or reservation.”

The palmer rose from his seat, and, advancing to the oratory, knelt down before the rood: he then drew a crucifix from his breast, imprinted on it the kiss of truth, and again returned to his seat.

“I will strive to credit thee, holy palmer,” cried Blanche, “but let me hear from thy lips that Sir Aubrey Marcel is still alive—that thou didst journey with him to the holy sepulchre, and with him didst combat the enemies of Christ — say — when was this ?

“ Your English summer had scarce commenced,” replied the pilgrim, with a deep and thrilling sigh, “ when I quitted Palestine and the knight, Sir Aubrey. Fortune had made us fellow-travellers over many a weary league, companions in many a desperate enterprise, and finally in captivity. We fell together into the hands of the Saracens, and, like dogs, were thrust into the common dungeon.”

“ And was Sir Aubrey long a prisoner?” said the lady.

“ Full fifteen months we were iron-bound, hand and foot,” replied the palmer; “ but calamity had taught us patience; and often did Marcel say, his best fortune would be to leave his ashes on the dungeon-floor.

“ Ah, woe the while!” exclaimed Blanche.

“ Often he press’d to his breast, a portrait, the likeness, as I deemed it, of his mistress; and when the sun threw its rays into our vault, he gazed on it with unsated and gloomy pleasure.”

“ Holy Virgin,” cried Blanche, raising

her eyes and clasping her hands with fervent thankfulness, “I can now, Sir Palmer, give credence to thy tale. That portrait was, indeed, his lady’s likeness. She gave it him —”

“ When she received his vow of love, and repaid it with her own — the silver waves of the Thames danced beneath the pale moon as she witnessed the compact.

“ Ha, merciful Jehu!” exclaimed the lady, rising from her seat, and gazing upon the palmer, who continued in a more subdued tone.

“ Such was the entrancing scene, he hath often told me, finished his hour of joy — that hour so short, and yet so rapturous — so transient, and yet so fraught with delicious enthusiasm — in the day of blood, and horror, and darkest sorrow, it hath ever clung to his remembrance.”

“ Thou wert, indeed, his bosom friend,” returned the lady Blanche, “no stranger could have scanned his heart so closely. But how did ye escape from your captivity?”

" Not by ransom, lady," replied the pilgrim, raising his head abruptly ; " no red gold of ours was doled forth to the avaricious Saracen as the meed of our liberty ; a fire, which consumed our prison, gave freedom to every captive. We fled, and, disguised as pilgrims to Jerusalem, in safety gained the holy city. Sir Aubrey had sworn to do penance at the sepulchre. Had he passed onward, my tale had been better told."

" What meanest thou, Sir Palmer ! " exclaimed Blanche, " he did not die, or thou hast deceived me ? "

" Would to Saint Cyril he had fallen a corpse upon the hard rock of the Sepulchre when he first knelt before it ? " cried the pilgrim.

" Holy Virgin ! " shrieked the lady, " why utterest thou this horrid imprecation ? "

" He would not, then, have proved false to his love, apostate to his faith, a deserter of his friend, a monument of perfidy in every tie. Holy Saint Werburgh ! What feelings will be those of the King, his master ; of the noble Lan-

caster; of Manny, his friend; of his Mistress, the beautiful Morgana; when they learn, that sinking from his early nature, the poursuivant d'amour fell a victim to the wiles of a Jewish courtezan! Will they not scoff and scorn, heap insults upon his head, and despise his very memory? Yea, they will sicken at his folly, and blot his image from their remembrances."

" Ah! say not so," cried Blanche, bursting into tears: " Say not so, Sir Palmer. Thou seest before thee the wretched Morgana,—still more wretched as the wife of the marcher Du Chatelet; but though the folly of Aubrey Marcel may add another sting to the viper which gnaws her soul, never will Morgana insult him, or abandon his memory. And thou, Sir Pilgrim, thou didst not give up thy friend to the demon that possessed him?"

The palmer, leaning forward, shrouded himself in his vestments, whilst he replied in a low voice, " No, lady, though my attentions were bitter gall to his soul,

I watched him till the last — he died in my arms.”

“ Ha! villain, thou liest — ” cried the lady, springing from her seat, and staggering forward ; but before she could reach the pilgrim’s seat, her senses fled, and she fell into the arms of her attendant. But her swoon was of short duration ; the very violence of her emotion serving to recall her sensibility, and she arose, and retook her seat on the dais with a calm but deeply sorrowful countenance, as one upon whom fortune had emptied the phial of her wrath, and despair had set her heavy and immutable seal. Several minutes elapsed before she ventured again to address the pilgrim ; but her fear of entering upon the death of her lover, being overcome by her anxiety to learn every particular of his fate, she resolved once more to accost him.

“ Thou sayest, Sir Pilgrim,” she said, that Aubrey Marcel is dead — that thou did’st see him die — what proof hast thou of this more than thine own word ? When I gave him the portrait he once held so dear, he swore by his honour, should he

die in a foreign land, he would send it me by the man who should receive his dying breath. How sayest thou to this?"

The palmer put his hand in his bosom, and, with an air which betokened deep commiseration, drew forth the portrait. Blanche flew towards him, grasped the picture, recognised it at a glance, and again fell senseless into the arms of the pilgrim, who, throwing aside his frock and hood, discovered to the eyes of Blondel and Blanche's attendant the face and form of Sir Aubrey Marcel, but so darkly tanned by the beams of an Asiatic sun, and so gaunt, meagre, and war-worn, that none, but those intimately acquainted with his lineaments and person, could have recognised in him the once lively and fascinating poursuivant d'amour. He was clad (as our readers have before seen) in a haubergeon of double mail, and bore upon the sleeves of his gypon (a leatherne doublet worn beneath his armour) the green cross of the English croissaders. His visage carried in it a triumphant, yet stern ex-

pression, as though he considered himself still a conqueror in possessing the tried affection of his mistress. But this tinge of satisfaction soon vanished, and he gazed upon her faded features with a countenance so profoundly concerned, so deeply touched with melancholy and despair, that neither Florence nor the minstrel durst interrupt the current of his grief by any exclamation or sign of recognition. He was soon, however, aroused from this sad composure by the long continuance of Blanche's fit, which, baffling the efforts of her attendant to re-animate her, threatened to end in the dissolution of the sufferer. Fearfully alarmed at this supposition, the knight hung over the fragile lily which he held in his arms, and in accents fraught with deep emotion endeavoured to recall her to life.

“ Morgana !” he cried, “ beloved Morgana ! — awake — it is thine own knight arisen from the dead for thy sake. He hath escaped the Paynim lance, and the Syrian plague, — all things have yielded before thy love and beauty. —

Awake, beloved! — It is Marcel, thine own true and unspotted knight.”

But this endearing invocation failed also to arouse his mistress, whose features the cadaverous hue of death seemed gradually to invade. Even her respiration appeared to be suspended, and a clammy moisture, resembling the deathly sweat, evaporated from all her pores. At this sight, the grief of the poursuivant turned to outrageous frenzy, and he exclaimed in loud and bitter accents, “ She is dying, — holy Virgin ! my Morgana is dying. — Fool ! ideot, that I was, to cast away my last hope for vanity. Morgana, revive ! — Heaven hath deserted me ; I wear this green cross in vain, — a curse hath pursued me ever. — Ah ! holy Jesu, for Saint Charity have mercy ! — If ever this arm hath champion’d thy cause against the infidels, if ever my lance hath taken revenge upon the unbelievers for reproach of thy name, if ever I have bowed before thy sepulchre, and hung up before it the meritorious armour crimsoned with the blood of thy

foes, grant me but one boon — suffer Morgana to live."

Whether this address, as it arose spontaneously from the croissader, gained credit with the meek and lowly Saviour, we must not presume to imagine ; but, at the very conclusion, the colour came once more into the cheeks and lips of the lady Blanche ; her breathing recommenced without difficulty, and with a gentle sigh, she opened her eyes, and looked attentively upon the persons who surrounded her.

"Blessed be thy holy name," said the knight in a low and devout tone ; "thine ear is ever open to the cries of thy servants."

"Where is the palmer?" said Blanche, "and what man art thou, that at this dead hour standest harnessed in Du Chatelet's bower?

The knight averted his face, and replied in gentle accents, "I am still the palmer lady though I have doffed my weeds. — Knowest thou not my voice ?

"Ay sooth, Sir Pilgrim," answered the lady, thoughtfully, "I have heard such

an one, but 'tis so long ago I have forgotten where."

" And my person?"

" Thy figure I know not, and thy face thou dost conceal."

" But now!" returned the knight, turning round, and placing himself where a lamp reflected full upon his visage. The lady gazed for some time at a distance, then gradually drew nearer, until, at length, her colour changed, came and went with violent flushes, and she flew to the knight, thrust back his hair, and stamped furiously on the ground nigh choked with her rising emotions. She, with great difficulty, exclaimed, " Thou art not," to which the croissader replied, " I am :" and she again became insensible in his arms. The minstrel and Blanche's attendant wept, whilst a gush of delightful tears burst from the eyes of the poursuivant, which, trickling over the face of his mistress, speedily restored her animation.

On recovering herself, the Lady Blanche perused, in silence, that countenance she had so long delighted to

dwell upon, and, in that change of complexion, that meagreness of person, that grimness and almost ghastliness of feature, that staidness, sobriety, and despondency of spirit, she at once recognised, and deeply felt the lamentable state to which disappointed love and decayed hope had reduced her lover. She wept bitterly at the thought, and, “in her mind’s eye,” contrasted the happiness and increasing enjoyment they should both have experienced, had fortune been propitious to their desires, with the misery and desolation occasioned by their disastrous fate.

“I had fancied,” she exclaimed, “the sight of thee, Aubrey, would have brought back my happiness; for many had given thee up to death, and I thought alone of thy body’s safety. Now thou art here, my heart sickens that thou seest me another’s wife.”

“Ha! grace Dieu!” cried the pursuivant, interrupting her, whilst a flash of fiery indignation shot from his eye which showed that his youthful spirit was not entirely quenched: “Remember it not

— let that most accursed fact sleep in thy recollection. — I learned at court, whence I am newly come, that thou wert but a widow to thy tyrant's company — that thou wert mad, and I know not what. — Pardon me, fair Morgana, if I rejoiced in thy calamity. — But thy death I could have better brook'd than thy marriage to another.”

“ A widow to Du Chatelet have I ever been,” replied the lady, “ He is here but seldom, and never approaches my bower. But how comes it, since thou hast been in London, that thy friends know not of thy safety?”

“ I staid there but a night, and saw but Manny” returned Marcel. “ By his advice I still wear these palmer’s weeds, in which I passaged from Jerusalem. Thy husband’s power he held too great, at present, to allow safety to his foes, and bade me beware discovery. From him I learned thy supposed insanity, and I hastened hitherward dreading to meet a sight, which, thanks to the Virgin, I am spared. The story I told thee of myself, thou wilt pardon my having

feigned, to try thy constancy — though the trial gave thee pain, to me it ministered the balm of life. And may I hope, beloved Morgana! that thy madness is as unsubstantial as my apostacy? that thou wearest it but as a mask to blind thy tyrant?

“Holy Virgin!” exclaimed Blanche, “if there be sin in the deception, pardon it, for thy Son’s sake.”

“Ha, then, by Saint George!” cried the poursuivant, “there is hope for me still. Soon, very soon, will I exchange these weeds for mail, and once more lay lance to my arcon of war.”

“The whole border,” said the minstrel, “from Chester city to Chirk castle, cries harron upon Mortimer and Du Chatelet. Our men-at-arms, the boldest marauders that ever crossed the Welsh marches, are ever on the spur. Guisebert Hay plunders Bangor and Caergwyneth for march and castle-guard. Bonnelance will have every tithe-beast on the English side, and the constable of Harding levies a quit exaction as far as Vale-royal. The whole palatinate is

spoiled and wasted ; and if some order be not speedily taken, 'tis like bonny Cheshire will become a desert waste."

" Some order will be taken, good fellow," replied the poursuivant ; " Mortimer and his minions have attained their height of pride — the scale will now turn, and they will fall more rapidly than they have risen."

The significant smile, with which Sir Aubrey accompanied this denunciation, betokened a foreknowledge of some scheme in agitation to destroy the power of the favourite, Mortimer, whose infamous commerce with the queen-mother, together with his pride, arrogance, and magnificent style of living, had drawn upon him the detestation, the hatred, and envy of all classes of people ; and this universal feeling rendered it far from improbable that a plan might be already concerted for hurling the queen and her paramour from power, as they had done the weak and unfortunate Edward. Nor was Blanche a hypocrite so great as to counterfeit sorrow or tenderness for her husband on this insinu-

ation of his downfal. With genuine and spontaneous feelings she raised her hands to Heaven, and joined a prayer for the deliverance of her country with one for her own enfranchisement from so heavy and insupportable a thralldrom.

So much time had been occupied in this momentous interview, and hour after hour had glided away with such silent celerity, unnoticed by either of the lovers, that the grey dawn of morning began to glimmer in the east, and the feathered minstrels, shaking off the heaviness of slumber, commenced their matin service to the Deity. And it is probable, so deeply were the knight and his mistress engaged in mutual explanation, that they would have suffered broad day to stare them in the face, had not the minstrel suggested the danger which would attach to Sir Aubrey by longer abiding in the lady's chamber, as, if he were discovered, it would assuredly draw upon him the suspicion of the constable, Bonnelance, and thereby the vengeance of the marcher. With his usual disdain of peril, the poursuivant would have disre-

garded the advice of the minstrel; but Blanche, fearful of putting his safety again in hazard, besought him to quit her.

“Thou may’st come again to night,” she continued; “Blondel will conduct thee.”

“When I quit thee, Morgana,” said the poursuivant, “I leave thee until the work is achieved. I am bound by vows, and they must be performed. This day I part hence for Nottingham.”

“This day!” exclaimed Blanche, “and I have but seen thee once, for a few hours, for many a year! What need presses thee?”

“A need I cannot resist,” answered Sir Aubrey; “an occasion I cannot fail, nor avoid, nor tarry for. Thy fate and mine, and more than thine and mine, depend on this need; and judge, fair love, if I can ware my body and life on a dearer service.”

“Ah! well, I must part with thee,” said Blanche sighing, “for I trow thine honour is engaged.”

“ Thou shalt hear of me soon,” replied Aubrey; “ another moon shall not have waxed and waned before I will see thee again, or these eyes shall never on earth behold thee more.”

“ Thou art on some desperate adventure,” said Blanche; “ I know thy gallant soul doth delight in deeds of chivalry. But peril not thy life, I beseech thee, where the chances are not equal. I had lost thee once, Aubrey; let it not be for ever. Thou hast already thy meed of fame, let thine head now rule thine arm.”

“ Often, dear Morgana,” said the knight, “ have I sought death in the bloody field as eagerly as the coward would avoid it. Unhelmed, and with my target cast away, I have ridden to the charge; and in the very point of slaughter, where my companions fell beside me like grass before the scorching thunderbolt, death has avoided me and stalked aside. But for thy sake, love, I will wear my harness complete. Hope is revived; my despair is gone. The poursuivant d’amour is on his quest again.”

The lady smiled ; and the knight, after bidding her farewell, again shrouded himself in his pilgrim's garments, and, conducted by the minstrel, departed to his hostel.

CHAP. VIII.

Oh ! I am come from the holy land,
Where Christ did live and die ;
Behold the device I bear on my shield
The red-cross knight am I :
And we have fought in the holy land,
And we've won the victory ;
For with valiant might did the Christians fight,
And made the proud pagans fly.

The Red-cross Knight.

AFTER taking some repose, Sir Aubrey Marcel quitted the hosterie, and, proceeding to the gate of the monastery, desired admittance to the Lord Abbot, to whom, he said, he bore tidings of his absent son. Though this apology was now pretty stale, in consequence of the information brought by numerous pilgrims having proved idle and feigned, yet it was a passport never refused, and the palmer was instantly conducted to the hospitularia, where he found the abbot at breakfast, attended only by the

Welshman, Griffith Merodoc. A packet of papers, lying open on the table, declared the errand of the seneschal, who, at the knight's entrance, was apparently engaged in recounting to the abbot what he had heard from Sir Aubrey himself on the preceding evening; for, in a warm, animated, and confident tone he said, “ And py my faith, Lord Appot, and py the pones of my father and my mother, look you now, I do well credit what this palmer said ; for he appeared a staid, and a soper, and a worthy, and a religious knight, look you, as ever did eat pread and pottage. Put here he is to answer for himself. Question him close, as you know how. If he is an impostor, I am the silliest lad that ever cried ‘ ba ! ’ after the goats on the mountains.”

The palmer, enveloping himself in his frock and cowl, drew nigh to the seat of Ingulphus, and, leaning upon his staff, awaited, in silence, the abbot’s greeting.

“ Benedicite, Son ! ” said the superior, “ Thy journey, I see, hath been long and toilsome. Seat thyself, and I will then talk with thee.”

The palmer gently shook his head, and continued standing.

“Hast thou brought reliques with thee from Jerusalem?” said Ingulphus, not daring to enter at once upon the more important enquiry.

“I have brought fifteen wounds upon my body, Sir Abbot,” replied the knight; “but no relic else.”

“And thou didst win those gallant wounds,” cried Ingulphus with sparkling eyes, “in fight against the Saracens?”

The palmer bowed.

“Then thou hast reliques,” continued the abbot, “which no one can rob thee of; and they will plead for thee, Sir Palmer, more effectually than the whole shrine of Saint Thomas. But, prithee, answer me truly, as thou art a Christian soldier. Did’st thou ever see Sir Aubrey Marcel in thy wars or pilgrimage?”

“Constantly,” replied the knight.

“Then ye were companions?” said Ingulphus.

“Sworn brothers,” returned the palmer.

“ He fought where thou did’st receive thy wounds ?”

The knight nodded assent.

“ But is he still alive, Sir Palmer ?” said the abbot ; “ I would not have thee flatter me. Speak truly ; and though he be dead, if he have won his meed of fame, I will not, if it be possible, I will not grieve.”

“ Thy son is living, Sir Abbot,” replied the palmer. “ Together we traversed Palestine, and crossed the Bosphorus. On foot we journeyed through Greece, Hungary, Germany, and Flanders, and but of late arrived in England.”

“ In England !” cried the abbot, rising from his seat and tottering towards the table, on which he supported himself ; “ Aubrey in England ! thou dost but sport with my credulity. Others have practised thus upon my feelings, but they have ever taken care to be distant when their impostures were discovered. Do thou beware, Sir Palmer, I can bear no trifling.”

“ Thou shalt not need,” Sir Abbot, returned the knight ; “ thy son is in the

town, and but awaits this previous preparation before he comes in person to thy feet."

Ingulphus, whose irrepressible emotions struggled fiercely for a vent, now gasped for breath, and trembled in every limb. Supporting himself with both his hands upon the table, he bade the palmer conduct his son into his presence. Unwilling to continue the fearful suspense in which his father lingered, the knight threw off his hood and frock, and knelt down before the abbot, who, uttering a cry of joy, sank on his knees beside him, and folded him in his arms. We need not attempt to describe a scene which it is scarcely possible to paint to the life, nor is it probable we should much interest our readers, were we to enter in detail, into a description of the intense feelings of joy and disappointed despair manifested by the monk. But we cannot omit recounting that fervent spirit of devotion which induced him to cry out, in the words of the evangelist, " Sit nomen Domini benedictum, nam filius iste meus

mortuus erat et revixit : perieratque, et inventus est!"

The Welshman also, upon whose warmth of disposition this moving scene had acted with inconceivable power, capered around the chamber, laughed and cried alternately, sang, prayed, and talked in a mixture of Norman, Saxon, and British oratory. It was long ere the Lord Abbot could restrain his animation, for to his repeated requests that he would be silent, Merodoc only replied, " *Y gwîr lâs, ni chyll mo' i liw* — true plue keeps its hue, my Lord Appot. *Py moel y varn*, that is what you call the Hill or the Mount of Judgment, look you ; I am so glad and rejoiced, and bewildered, that the knight is returned, God pless him ! I could jump out of my skin, and out of my pones for joy."

The poursuivant, grateful for his present attachment, as well as for his past services, grasped his hand with great fervour."

" If I am here now, Merodoc," said Aubrey, " it is to thee I owe my life. A day will come when I may better reward thee. But tell no man I live,

save those who aided my flight. They are leal and gallant friends, and deserve my confidence. Their services, beside, may ere long be needed.

“ Ha, what meanest thou, Aubrey ? ” said his father : “ thou wouldest not attempt the Lady Blanche ? ”

“ No, good father,” replied the poursuivant ; “ I saw her this morning, and while her tyrant lives, I will not again behold her. But his time is drawing nigh ; his fate is at hand.”

“ Thou art mysterious, Aubrey,” said Ingulphus : “ speak out.”

“ Perchance it is my presence,” said the Welshman, withdrawing.

“ Nay, hold, Merodoc ; not so,” replied the knight ; “ but close the door and hear ye all. When arrived in England, I sped me first to London, where, of the whole court, I would see none but my friend, Walter Manny. He, right glad to see me, unfolded all the business of the court. What had been done since that I journeyed forth, and what was then in agitation ; bidding me beware the

fierce Du Chatelet, whose power and fortune, so he said, were peerless."

" Ay, true," said the abbot, " or else thy wrong had not been unavenged."

" Nor shall it be, by Saint George!" cried the knight; " for Manny disclosed to me a plot, (if plot it may be called that is full of honour and dangerous enterprise,) which, if it succeed, shall wreak woe and vengeance on the heads of Mortimer and his consorts."

" How so, Aubrey?" cried the abbot, impatiently.

" The young king," continued the poursuivant, " hath hitherto been the mere puppet of royalty. The Queen and Mortimer have all the power, and use it, by my faith, without discretion. Edward is, at length, tired of the yoke, and hath, moreover, discovered an infamous commerce 'twixt these twain rulers, which hath wrought him to attempt their overthrow."

" Indeed!" said Inguiphius! " and is " this sooth?"

" Ay sooth, by the rood," proceeded the poursuivant: " he hath opened his mind to his kinsman of Lancaster, and

hath found him forward to maintain his quarrel. With his counsel and assistance he hath engaged some half-score nobles to take part in their design. Sir William Montacute, Humphrey de Bohun, and his brothers William and Edward ; Ralph Stafford, Nevil of Hornby, and Sir William Clinton,—these and some other knights of his body, all men of reputation, will meet at Nottingham, whither I go to day."

" But what are these, were their numbers trebled," said the abbot, " to Mortimer and his abettors? He seldom rides without ten-score knights and their followers in his separate train, beside the host of court-dependants."

" Of these," replied the knight, " Mortimer is the head, the life, and soul. Cut him off, and the huge mass, weakened and dismembered, will sink with its own weight, and perish without a struggle. The parliament to be holden at Nottingham has been chosen as a fitting season for the execution of the enterprise, and already has Sir William Eland, the constable, been disposed to

favour the king. The time is apt — the plot ripe for execution — and every knight who has heard of this adventure, and refuses the hazard and the glory, should ware his spurs upon the cook's halbard."

"Thou sayest rightly and bravely, my Son," returned the abbot: "at the command of his sovereign, every true knight will be ready to peril both life and land in his quarrel; and though I am old and hoary, and my limbs are not so active as when I combated the infidels in Palestine, yet, for once, the dying taper shall blaze out, and I will again clap harness on my back for Edward Plantagenet."

"Thou wilt not, gallant father!" exclaimed Aubrey. "Bethink thee of the danger."

"By Saint George, I will," replied Ingulphus: "what talkest thou of danger to me? The templar hath still his place within my breast, though these hairs have grown gray beneath the peaceful mitre."

"But what excuse hast thou," said the poursuivant, "for attending the court?

Thou may'st bring suspicion on the king."

" Shall I not attend my duties in parliament?" returned Ingulphus. " Though hitherto I have been a negligent peer, doth it not befit an old man to clear his conscience to his country? — Ay, by Saint Benedict, and I will do so."

" Peside," said Merodoc, " will it not pe better for Sir Poursuivant to ride and prick forward with my Lord Appot, than run into dangers and difficulties by journeying to Nottingham alone? My Lord Appot's train will give credit, and countenance, and protection to him; which, as I live, is very needful and desireable in these plessed days of disturbance, look you."

" Thou sayest fairly, Sir Seneschal," answered Ingulphus: " it shall be so. — And lest Aubrey should run any chance of discovery, 'twere well he wore the arms and device of one of my knights."

" Now, by Saint George and his Lady Sabrina," exclaimed the poursuivant with enthusiasm, " I will never disgrace my reputation by wearing a false cogniz-

ance. I will ride with ye, and gladly ; but it shall be in the habit I wear, as a pilgrim and croissader.”

“ As ye list,” said the abbot : “ we shall be strong enough to encounter all adversaries on the road, if we may but pass these barriers. Thou, Merodoc, away to Waldeyff. Thou mayest tell him all that has passed ; and bid him call forth our arierban of yeomanry to attend me to Nottingham ; our procurator shall summon the Cnichts who owe service to our convent. Thou knowest our will at full — away with thee, and lose no time.”

The Welshman, leaving the knight to discourse to his father, the various “ battles, sieges, and fortunes he had past,” quitted the monastery, and returned to the house of Aprisidly, where he found the mendicant and mine host hotly engaged in examining Blondel upon the discoveries which the palmer had made to the Lady Blanche the night before. But the minstrel, with cautious and political circumspection, replied generally to their inquiries, and did not give them

the most distant hint that it was Sir Aubrey Marcel himself that had appeared before them. The pied friar saluted Merodoc, as he entered the hosterie, with a loud shout, and the chorus of an old song —

“ Saint George he was for England,
And Saint David was for Wales ;
When hur was in a passion
Hur could eat a pag of nails.”

“ Go to, go to! lousy friar, — peggarly scurvy knave,” cried Merodoc, contemptuously. “ Hold thy peace, switch-tailed peast, or I will drive a nail into thy pald pate. Master Hosteller, pe pleased to send one of thy trencher-scrapers to Alan Waldeyff, and pid him hither this plessed minute.”

“ A pig’s a foul bird to fly,” said the friar. “ But what’s in the wind now, that thou art in such a wild splutter? Hast thou got news of Sir Aubrey.

The Welshman winked, nodded, and laughed, replying, “ You shall see what you shall see, — that is, if Saint Francis does not strike thee plind for thy sins.—

Peshrew me, put thou art a right naughty and depauched friar as any in merry England."

" And what can'st thou make of that, my knight of the chain and towel?" returned the mendicant. " If Saint Francis hath need to punish his votaries, I wot those of Saint David have not their garments as wool. But what hast thou done with that vagabond palmer? He followed thee to the abbey."

" Take that for thy vagapond," cried the Welshman, giving him a smart buffet on the head; " it will teach thee manners and reverence to thy petters and superiors. - Thou do'st call him vagapond, I trow, because he detected thy lies and treacheries?"

" Marry," replied the friar, rubbing his head, " I will but count thy blow as lent, and I will pay it thee again with use. — But, touching this Palmer, who, by my faith, is some outpartner in disguise, as ye might perceive by his wearing harness beneath his frock; his whole tale was false from first to last, and that I will avouch before thee, or any

other boor in Christendee or Heathenness."

"Gramercy, Friar," returned the seneschal, "I doubt thee not, nor would I say, or declare, or uphold, look you, that thou would'st poggle at any lie, how pig, and monstrous, and improbable soever, when thou art in the mood."

"Thou art now dreaming of the bards of thine own country," said the friar, "who are paid for inventing feats of your Welsh chivalry, that they would not dare to look on."

"Ha, thou apominable peast!" exclaimed the Welshman in great indignation. "Dost thou say and avouch that the lovely and harmonious poems of Llywarch Hen, of Merlin Emrys, and of Taliesin are fapulous inventions? The stories of their own deeds were they, sure enough; and their feats of arms, and their enterprises and adventures of chivalry, look you, were too great, and surprising, and admiraple of themselves, to need or pe in want of any fapulous addition."

"Ha, ha, ha!" ejaculated the friar;

" and who ever heard of any of them, save that wizard Merlin? and he was a Frenchman born."

This assertion, as it questioned the authenticity of the most favourite sage and poet of Cambria, made the seneschal grin and almost dance with rage. He fixed his teeth together, and placing his arms a-kimbo, continued, " and thou hast never heard of Urien, one of three pulls of war?"

" No," replied the mendicant, " nor any body else."

" Nor Uther Pendragon," continued Merodoch " the wonderful hero?"

" Never," returned brother Adrian.

" Nor Gwalchmai son of Gwyar, Drydwlas son of Tryphin, and Eliwhlod son of Madog ap Uther; the three golden-tongued knights of king Arthur's court?"

" No, by Saint Thomas à Becket," answered the mendicant, " never a one of them."

" Py the honourable feast of Caswallon," cried the indignant Cambrian, " thou wilt swear thou didst never hear

of King Arthur himself. Put rememper, thou pag of lies and legends, rememper the Welsh proverp, Goreu gair yw gair o wir,—that is to say, in your vulgar Saxon, Truth is the pest puckler.”

This admonition caused another roar of laughter from the pied friar, who, when he could use his speech, replied, “ I have heard of King Arthur, though when or where he lived, no one could ever tell me, save in fairy-land. But as for the golden-tongued knights and the bulls of war, they are either heroes of thine own fancy, or the creatures of some crack-brained bard as mad, and as credulous as thyself.”

“ Go to, go to ! pagan! — infidel!” exclaimed the Welshman, with superlative contempt; “ I do hold you in pity, and in scorn for your ignorance, and your mockery. Holy Saint Tavid ! that a man should live in Pritain, and never hear of Urien or Gwalchmai !”

At this grave exclamation, the Minstrel and Miles Aprisidly could not refrain from joining in laughter with

the mendicant, very much to the chagrin and disappointment of the seneschal, who had expected to form a party against him, in opposition to his incredulity; but who now found himself the butt of their united mirth; and it is scarcely possible to say how far he might have been carried by this turn of affairs, had not the progress of his wrath been arrested by the arrival of Waldeyff. At sight of him, however, his mood transformed itself from an eager bitterness of indignant wrath to the scornful superiority of self-satisfied triumph.

“ Now, my learned clerk,” he exclaimed, “ the granger, and Miles, and the minstrel shall know, and judge, and opserve, look you, how wise, and discreet, and knowing, and judicious that pare sconce of yours is. The Virgin pefriend me, I am ready to die with laughing at thy folly and thy stupidity. Alan Waldeyff, thou dost rememper the palmer that was here last night, and who shewed and laid open to us the right

side and the naked conscience of this miseraple peggar?"

"Ay sooth," returned the granger, "I shall not forget him readily, for he said he had fought in the holy wars with Sir Aubrey Marcel."

"Good truth, good truth," exclaimed Merodoc; "put the peggar here has thought it proper, and decent, and pecoming, look you, to call him liar, and fapler, and vagapond; pless my heart, as if any man could be so pad and so vile as himself."

"Thou execrable—" ejaculated the friar; but before he could proceed, the Welshman pushed him rudely by the shoulder, and cried, "Hold your peace and your prattles, scurvy knave, and let a gentleman speak without disturbances and interruptions, as it pecomes you. And will any of you believe that this liar, and fapler, and vagapond, this out-parter in disguise, as the peggar called him, is no other man, God pless him, than the prave, and the gallant, and the chivalrous poursuivant himself!"

The latter part of the sentence he

spoke in a low and significant tone, which conveyed the information to those who encircled him, but was not loud enough to be heard by any other persons in the hosterie, and the revelation was received by all (but the minstrel, who, as our readers will remember, was already in the secret) with glances of astonishment.

“The poursuivant!” said Waldeyff.

“The poursuivant!” echoed Aprisidly; “Blondel, thou did’st know of this?”

“I did,” replied the minstrel; “but I had no power to reveal the secret.”

“That,” said the seneschal, with an air of consequence, “he reserved for me. Put what hast thou to say for thyself, thou maudlin friar? Down on thy knees, and crave the knight’s grace.”

“By my hallidome,” cried the mendicant, “I knew not it was he, or I would have undertaken to learn Welsh, ere I would have called him aught save the bravest, worthiest, and noblest knight in the world’s chivalry.”

“Touching the Welsh tongue,” said the seneschal, “thou could’st never learn

a finer nor a petter, though, peradventure, the task might prove hard and difficult to an ass like thee. Put, prave companions, the knight gives us hopes of petter days. He is now bound for Nottingham to the king's court and high session of Parliament, whither the lord appot and all his vassals will journey with him. Thou, Alan Waldeyff, must have together the arierpan of the yeomanry, and prepare for march."

"With a right good will," replied the granger, "if it be to follow the knight and his father to the world's end; and if there be need of our service so much the better. Elke bow and witch-hazel shaft were never better handled than by Cheshire chief of men, and that Sir Aubrey has proved before now."

"Put now, away," cried Merodoc impatiently, "hie to thy task, Alan Waldeyff, and keep counsel. Mark, master peggar, and master hosteller, no word of Sir Auprey. All must pe done in silence and in secrecy, look you, as though we were thieves and Robertsmen."

Very soon after this direction of the

seneschal, the several members who composed this assembly, retired to their engagements:—Waldeyff to summon, arm, and regulate the yeomanry — the minstrel to attend his duties at the castle— the mendicant and mine host to resume the pleasing occupations of breakfast, in which they had been interrupted by the arrival of the Cambro-briton, who joined them at their meal.

CHAP. IX.

From gay guitar and violin the silver notes are flowing,
And the lovely lute doth speak between the trumpet's lordly blowing;
And banners bright from lattice light are waving every where.

Andalla's Bridal.

SOME few days elapsed in preparation for the Abbot's journey to Nottingham, during which many messages passed from the Lady Blanche to her lover, and from him to her in reply, through the medium of the minstrel; but, resolute in his determination of adhering to his vow, the poursuivant forbore to present himself in person before his mistress. The mendicant friar, availing himself of the general invitation which he had received from the abbot, for the services rendered by him in Sir Aubrey's escape from Malpas, took up his abode in the abbey; and by his frank and cheerful disposition,

which he knew perfectly well how to regulate according to the station, dignity, and temper of his companions, highly ingratiated himself with Ingulphus, who, at length, wrought upon him to exchange the rule of Saint Francis for that of Saint Benedict, and to fix his station for life within the walls of Malpas, subject to the approbation of his superior. In the intended journey, the office of crociarius, or cross-bearer, was assigned him, for which his stout and active figure, and his expertness in horsemanship, gave him peculiar qualification. The granger, Waldeyff, had not, in the mean time, been inactive. Chiefly by his unwearied diligence, the arriere-ban *, or military tenantry of the abbey, had been summoned, armed, and made ready for march, whilst the cnichts, who held fiefs under the monastery, had been regularly

* Arier-ban, or arriere-ban, signifies the edict of the king, or some feudal superior, commanding all his military tenants to assemble together, or be deprived of their estates; from the Saxon, hepe—exercitus, and ban—edictum. Cowell. edit. 1727. And used for the people themselves. Froissart.

called upon by father Danielus, the procurator, and were now prepared for the field. Griffith Merodoc had taken a hasty leave of the abbot and Sir Aubrey Marcel, designing, with affectionate consideration, to give his master, Sir Paschal Marcel, as early an intimation as possible of his nephew's return; but promising to rejoin the poursuivant at Nottingham, and, if it were possible, to bring the learned civilian in his company.

Little more than a week had elapsed of the month of October when the abbot and his retainers commenced their journey to Nottingham; and the season, as if in deference to the accommodation of the lordly priest, was shorn of its rigour, and still retained the verdure, the brilliancy, and the warmth of summer. With all the pomp and grandeur of that most magnificent priesthood the haughty Benedictine swept along, appearing rather as the representative of an eastern caliph, than the minister of the meek and lowly Jesus. His proper horse, a milk-white Arab, of grand proportions and uncommon speed, was barbed with housings of

purple velvet, sumptuously wrought with escutcheons of gold, bearing his own arms impaled with those of the church.

But it were superfluous to enter into a full description of the dress and splendour of Ingulphus and his companions. Skelton, a poet not far distant from this era, in describing the manners of the clergy of his own day, says, they

“ Ride with gold all trappyd,
In purpall and pall belapped,
Some hattyd and some cappyd,
Richly and warm wrapped :
God wot to their grete paynes !
In rochetts of fine reynes,
White as Mary’s milk ;
And tabards of fyne sylke,
And styropes with gold beglozyd ;”

such was the magnificence of the regular priesthood, which drew upon them first the admiration of the laity, next their envy, and eventually the ruin of their orders.

The mendicant, in his new office of crociarius, rode directly in advance of the abbot ; and Sir Aubrey Marcel, in his weeds of pilgrimage, bestrode a good

hackney, beside his father, and assisted him over uneven ground, or to pass the numerous rivers which occurred in the course of their march, and which were not always provided with bridges for the accommodation of travellers. The vanguard and rearward of the company were formed by the knights on horseback, whilst the hardy yeomanry, more lightly armed, proceeded on foot, disposed in two bodies, before and behind their feudal superior.

We must confess that this military array was neither lawful, nor, in times of a more peaceable character, usual in the suite of a churchman, since the days of Becket, whose vanity, our learned readers will remember, induced him to ride with many score armed knights in his train ; — a dangerous example, which was afterwards wisely provided for by Henry the Second and his successors, in the many statutes enacted for the prevention of persons riding armed, to the manifest terror of the king's good lieges. But as, according to the old maxim, “ leges inter arma silent,” the riding armed and at-

tended with harnessed men were, in these times of dubious peace, altogether unnoticed ; and so the custom long continued ; for, in Stowe, and other ancient authors, we read of the Earls of Salisbury, Warwick, and Oxford, and the Duke of Exeter, severally attending a parliament, held in London, in the reign of Henry the Sixth, with three hundred armed and liveried retainers. We may well agree, with the law-grammar, that “*exceptio probat regulam* ;” for the appearance and conduct of these noblemen and their vassals caused infinite terror and dissatisfaction throughout the country.

That the abbot might be more at ease, he made short stages, seldom advancing above fifteen or twenty miles in a day ; and, when on the march, proceeding at a slow and regular pace, more agreeable to the good living and lazy inaptitude to chivalrous exercises conspicuous in the monks, than to the hot and fiery tempers of the knights and their destriers of war. Beguiling the way, however, with listening to the detailed adventures of his son, Ingulphus found his journey far from

wearisome, and seemed, in a great measure, to recover the spirit and vivacity of his early years. At the conclusion of each day's march, the purveyor of the abbey, who attended his superior, was deputed to select some reputable hosterie (similar to Chaucer's good inn of the Tabard, in Southwark) for their use and refreshment, where, enjoying the luxuries of the table, and the best wines of France and Italy, the abbot, the monks, the cnichts and Sir Aubrey Marcel recruited themselves for the morrow's progress. The yeomanry, beneath the dais, fed heartily upon coarser provision, and washed it down with copious draughts of the nut-brown ale, accompanying each libation with some song or merriment which caused infinite laughter and enjoyment among them. And no man could be more pleased than was the abbot, at the comfort and good humour of his tenantry ; for, in his youth, as a knight-templar, he had been the idol of the soldiers for his affability and jovial temper, as well as for his valour and conduct in the field ; and the duties of

his priesthood, and the rule of Saint Benedict, had been able to effect no change in the suavity of his disposition.

As they approached Nottingham, they frequently overtook, or were overtaken by, troops of horsemen and companies of people on foot, bound for the like destination as themselves. Prelates and courtiers thronged the road, ostentatiously engirt by trains of high fed and gaudily liveried retainers ; whilst the grim baron, at the head of his armed vassals, and displaying his emblazoned banner, seemed to threaten, by this warlike note of preparation, some imminent political convulsion. Not unfrequently, upon the edges of the forest, were seen wild outlaws (with whom all England, and Nottinghamshire in particular, at this time abounded,) gazing upon the passing travellers, who were, happily, too numerous and too well armed to stand in fear of their practices. Several of the abbot's train, among the chivalry, willing to make a display of their courage, couched their lances, and rode a tilt against the foresters ; but the latter, viewing their

career with cool indifference, withdrew into the woods just as the horsemen attained the border, and repaid them their compliment with a flight of arrows, by which a courser was slightly wounded. It was evident, that by this random shot, they did not wish to commit damage upon the persons of the aggressors : for so perfectly skilled in archery were the descendants of Robin Hood, George-a-Green, William o' Goldsborough, and the other free worthies of the forest, that their shots, when delivered in earnest, were equally sure, irresistible, and fatal. The arrow, which had penetrated the horse's poitrinal, and lacerated his shoulder, was drawn out with little difficulty, and the animal continued his march without any bad consequence ensuing from the wound. But the rider, a hot young squire, whose spirit had prompted him to put foremost in the career, was obliged to stand the ridicule of those who had not joined in the adventure, on the unfortunate issue of his maiden achievement.

“ By the mass, Arnold,” cried Alan

Waldeyff, who stalked steadily along at the head of the yeomanry, “ thou must run another tilt, and do better service, before thou dost win thy spurs. But cheer thee, bold heart, the outlaws thought thy destriere the gallanter animal of the two, and so gave him the honour of the shaft.”

“ By my faith, Waldeyff,” returned the youth, while his eyes sparkled with rage, “ I will peril my body on any deed that thou durst adventure, or any man here. It seems to me thy heart failed thee, or thou wouldest have sought those outlaws where nought might resist a man dismounted.”

“ Knowest thou so little of chivalry,” cried the granger, scornfully, “ as to need thy lesson from a yeoman ? I should have done thee wrong, Arnold, had I thrust between thee and honour. As for lack of courage, Sir Whitespurs, I will ware my body against any twain of thy fellowship, either on horseback or a-foot, and there’s my gage upon it.”

The horseman, with a brow and lip flinging back defiance, sprang from his

courser, and was about to seize the granger's glove, which he had cast upon the ground, when the poursuivant drew his rein and halted between them.

"I cast down my warder, Sirs ;" he said, with a tone half playful half serious, "the challenge is given and accepted ; but I forbid the duel."

"When thou hast sovereign power, Sir Palmer," answered Arnold, impetuously, "I will obey thy mandate. But, though I hold thee reverently, I will wage battel without thy yea or nay."

"What ho! Marshal! cried Sir Aubrey jocularly, "have this rebel to thy keeping, and see that he holds the peace, as thou wilt answer me."

A monk, who, on days of ceremony, bore the standard of Saint Peter before the abbot, and to whom the secret of Sir Aubrey's presence and disguise was confided, approached the retainer with great gravity, and laying his hand upon his shoulder, bade him remount his horse, and take his station beside him. To this command the squire, at first, paid little attention ; but finding it enforced

by the abbot himself, who had beheld the scene with internal mirth, he consented to accept the palmer's offered mediation, rather than put himself into durance ; and his quarrel with Waldeyff was speedily adjusted.

The sun had disappeared, and a gloomy twilight overspread the face of the country, before the abbot and his train came in sight of Nottingham, the huge outlines of whose towers formed a distant and shadowy horizon. Afar off could be heard “ the stilly hum” (as Shakspeare terms it) of the multitude ; and a number of lights, in different parts of the castle, chequering the sombre scene, enlivened and relieved it. At intervals, as the changeable breeze blew towards them, they could distinguish the bells of the churches and monasteries ringing vespers, and, above all, the shrill bugle note summoning knights and gentlemen to the courtly revels. As they approached nearer, the sounds became more distinct, and the uproar and confusion of the crowded town more plain and apparent. Servitors and domestics

could be observed running with marvellous alacrity along the inner parapets of the castle walls, bearing lighted flambeaux, the red glare of which, striking upon their faces, gave them the bronzed appearance of the incolites of Pandemonium.

“ By Saint Pancras !” cried the abbot, “ they are at high revel. Knowest thou, Aubrey, whether the young Queen Philippa be with the court ?”

“ Yea,” replied the knight ; “ for Manny told me she was never apart from her husband. I have a shrewd guess ‘tis she who has put Edward on seeking a change in the state, though ‘twas Isabel that wrought the marriage.”

“ Likes she not Mortimer, then ?” said Ingulphus.

“ Ay, as the wolf his bane, the purple aconite,” replied the poursuivant. “ She will heave March from his standing, or lose her dignity. Her spirit and ambition will brook no equal, much less a dictator.”

“ And Mortimer hath a devil in him,” returned the abbot, “ that will not let

him doff his cap, in the way of submission, to the Holy Virgin herself."

" 'Tis the worse for him," said Sir Aubrey. " The Queen in judgment is above his match, and already do the estates look up to her as their idol. All men of honour frown on Mortimer, and Queen Isabel's power to back him is like dust in the balance. All who serve him do it but for gain. His friends and followers sink with him, and will, therefore, hold with him to the last. This makes it perilous to seize his person."

" But the king, thou sayest, is sure of Eland, the constable," returned the abbot ; " and if he be, the capture and death of the Earl of March may be effected without opposition."

" Not so, by Saint Werburgh!" answered Sir Aubrey ; " for his chamber servitors are a score of harnessed knights. Beside, his friends keep the castle ; and deem ye it an easy task to bring their match within the walls unseen and unheard?"

" Then how is it meant to win his

body," said Ingulphus, " if ye may neither use force nor fraud?"

" Were force tried," returned the poursuivant, " I durst stake my life on the king's success. But a civil war, good father, is to be shunned, and better had Edward and his friends peril their own lives than waste the realm by attempting openly to extirpate this faction. The plot was not matured when I saw Manny in London; we shall anon see the king, and he will confide to us his whole design."

By this time they had reached the outer barbican of the portal which had been closed since couvre-feu, and so wild was the tumult within the town, and so hurried and careless were the janitors, that the approach of Ingulphus and his party was entirely unobserved, and some time elapsed before the warder could be summoned to the gate by the loud shouts and bugle-blasts of the abbot's retainers. But he made them some compensation for the delay, by suffering none in their entrance, allowing them to pass almost without question, and en-

tirely without scrutiny. His only interrogatory was the common word, “ For whom, my masters?” to which Sir Aubrey replied, aloud, “ For God, and King Edward.”

They now passed onward to the monastery of Benedictines, where Ingulphus purposed to quarter himself and his train, and which lay at the opposite side of the town. As they proceeded they encountered numerous and large troops of harnessed knights and esquires, antic masquers, rough yeomen, and court pages; some galloping through the town with the celerity of thought, while the torches of their attendants, wafted back with the wind, and casting out myriads of sparkles, made each warrior resemble the god of war, attended by Bellona and the Furies: others, riding at a more sober pace, probably designing to astonish the gaping multitude with the costliness of their garments, and the blaze of their jewelry, conversed with one another, or with those of their friends that chose to proceed to the castle on foot. Some few of the younger knights, who, as Sir

Aubrey, were professed troubadours, halted beneath the casements of their mistresses, all the houses in the town being occupied by the nobility, the knights, the gentry, and their attendants; and upon their mandolines or viols d'amour played some provençal lovesonnet or romantic analogue. These were hailed by the passengers with cries of approbation or censure, according to the beauties or defects of their execution; but it must be confessed few undertook the difficult and delicate task of giving delight to the ladies who were not fully equal to the endeavour. The abbot and Sir Aubrey stopped several times in their march to listen to some favourite or affecting air; for Ingulphus, as well as his son, had a heart devoted to harmony, and a refined taste in music, which he had probably acquired in the holy wars amid the very seats of chivalry, melody, and romance. Of one rather merry sonnet, chanted by a voice which the poursuivant fancied he had heard before, and which proceeded from a cavalier whose horse was held by his

page, and whose figure, shrouded as well by a long mantle as by the shadow of the house wherein the lady of his adoration resided, could not, therefore, be distinguished, Ingulphus and the poursuivant awaited the conclusion; and which, for the benefit of our readers, we shall here set down, as the sonnet was more perfectly gathered afterwards by Sir Aubrey from the singer. The air was uncommonly beautiful; but the words, more jingling than elegant, those who have acquired their taste from the finished productions of modern times, and are not gifted with antiquarian indulgence, will scarcely think worthy of toleration. The voice of the troubadour was melodious and highly cultivated, and thus ran his song:

Lady ! come to the festive hall !
Arise and display thy beauty bright !
Damsels may shine in the festival,
Stars may sparkle with glittering light !
But both will glitter dim and poor,
Beside my lovely Reyne d'Amour.

Lady ! come to the festive hall !
Minstrels wait with lingering hand,

Ladies deck'd in purple and pall,
 Knights in harness, a valiant band,
 Fill the dais and throng the door,
 To gaze upon my Reyne d'Amour.

Lady ! come to the festive hall !
 Dance and revel do pause for thee :
 The knight thy peerless charms enthral,
 Stands gloomy among the chivalry !
 His eye is bright, his lance is sure,
 When guerdon'd by his Reyne d'Amour.

Lady ! come to the festive hall !
 Come and bring us mirth and life !
 Minstrels will brighten at thy call,
 Knights will start to the noble strife !
 Come ! our cank'ring sorrow cure,
 Lovely, charming Reyne d'Amour !

“ It is de la Folie,” said the poursuivant, when the troubadour had concluded ; “ I will address him.”

And riding up to the French knight, who had given his mandoline to his page, and was drawing off, he said, “ By your favour, Sir Knight, may I crave from you the way to the lodgings of that noble gentleman, Sir Raimonnet de la Folie ?”

“ What wantest thou with that gentleman, Sir stranger ?” replied the knight ; “ I am he.”

“ Saint Cyprian be thanked!” cried the poursuivant; “ I am the bearer of a message from Sir Aubrey Marcel, commonly termed le Poursuivant d’Amour.”

“ Friend!” returned the French knight, gravely, “ if thou dost think to banter, I would have thee know thou hast chosen a wrong person to practise thy jests upon. My friend Marcel is dead; ay, four years past.”

“ I banter thee not, Sir Knight,” said Aubrey; “ here am I with the noble Lord Abbot Ingulphus, father to the poursuivant, who will witness for me I lie not.”

“ And if what thou say’st be sooth,” cried de la Folie, “ I will give thee my best berry-brown destrier for thy news. What, ho! varlet, follow me.”

He put spurs to his palfrey and galloped after the abbot, (who had continued his march to the Benedictine abbey) closely followed by Sir Aubrey and the page, who, carrying a flambeau, enabled them to ride without danger or obstruction. But they only arrived in

time to see Ingulphus enter the monastery; whereupon Sir Raimonnet, dismounting, flung his rein to the page, and, accompanied by the poursuivant, who gave his horse to one of the yeomen, followed the abbot.

CHAP. X.

Where hast thou been ? and how art thou alive ?
— that thou art here beyond all hope,
All thought ; that all at once thou art before me,
And with such suddenness hast hit my sight,
Is such surprise, such mystery !

Mourning Bride.

THE French knight, regardless of the inquiries of the porter, acolythi, and other domestics of the abbey, pushed forward into the guest-room, where he found the abbot Ingulphus, attended by the superior of the convent, and surrounded by his own spiritual attendants and those of the house.

“ By our Lady of Paris ! ” he exclaimed, grasping the hand of Ingulphus, at the same time bowing to his reverend brother, “ right well met, Sir Abbot : this is the first time I ever had hearty desire to seek my ghostly father : I

would have a word with you in private, or in the presence only of this holy abbot."

"I will leave ye," said the superior, retiring.

"Nay, I pray ye," cried Ingulphus, "there is nothing which Sir Raimonnet has to say to me that you, brother Basileus, may not hear. But if it please ye we will dispense with all others."

At the command of their superiors, the monks and attendants attached to both abbots withdrew, leaving Sir Aubrey alone in their company, who, being perceived by the abbot Basileus, he said, "Did'st thou not hear, son, we would be alone?"

"There is no need that I quit ye, holy father," replied the palmer, throwing back his vestments; "I am a party concerned."

The French knight shrank backward, as if an actual spectre had risen out of the ground, and gazing stedfastly on the sun-burnt and hairy visage of his friend, spoke no word; but inwardly debated the reality of the appearance. It was

apparent he knew the figure and countenance ; for though he did not move a muscle, either of body or face, yet his eyes traversed the poursuivant from head to foot, as if purposely to identify each separate part. At last he said, slowly and gravely, “ It was thou that didst speak to me in the street, and thou hast spoken again but now to this holy father ? ”

“ By my faith,” cried the poursuivant, “ he is in doubt whether I be true flesh and blood, or an elfin knight. Give me thy hand, Raimonnet de la Folie—I am what thou seest, and no other.”

He advanced to the French knight, and took his hand, de la Folie making no opposition, but appearing to be stupefied with excess of wonder, and still gazing on him with undiminished curiosity.

“ But if, indeed, thou be’st Aubrey Marcel,” he said, after a long pause, “ as some remains of thy former lineaments would seem to indicate, wherefore has it been noised that thou wert

dead, and where hast thou been for these four long years ?

“ My story,” replied the poursuivant “ would be too long, and might perchance, call up recollections too bitter and unpleasant to be told at this time, and in this presence. But I have been, De la Folie, where thou hast been, and when thou didst raise thy banner for the Emperor Andronicus against the Turcomans at Nice, I witnessed thine exploits, and shared the conqueror’s fortune. Thou didst quit us on the reduction of that city ; but I, more hapless, awaited the next campaign, and fell, with the fortress, into the hands of the foe. I escaped but lately, and what thou seest, is all that is left of Aubrey Marcel.”

“ By the holy Virgin !” cried Sir Raimonnet, at once recovering his vivacity, “ I am well pleased to see so much. But at present thou must keep cover ; for thy foe, Bertrand du Chatelet, is here with a body of his brigands. The king has a word for thee ;—Manny, and I a whole mail full of news,— and

thou must see his grace if thou dost even go as thou art, and kill him with fright as thou hast nigh done me. Beshrew me, but thou hast the air of a mendicant, a right lying, begging, swaggering, and pilfering knave. Thou must shave, i'faith, and doff thine haubergeon, or thou wilt be torn in pieces for a knight templar."

" Gramercy for thy portrait, and thy counsel," replied the poursuivant, smiling ; " but I like not either. Thou mayst return to court, and tell King Edward thou hast seen me. If he need my service, he will find a way to see me — and the Earl of Lancaster — I would have him know I am here — Manny, too. — But use thy wit — only keep me not here long, for I am heartily awearied of confinement."

" King Edward," said the Abbot Basileus, " may surely speak with his own liegemen, free and undisguised."

'Tis true, he might, Sir Abbot," replied Aubrey ; " but it chances that I am at feud with Bertrand du Chatelet, and the king's word against his power,

will help me nothing. I must bend, holy father, if I would not break."

"When the storm is at the highest," said Sir Raimonnet, "it will soon be over; and the rosy morn and soft zephyrs will take place of the murky night, and the wild uproar of the tempest."

"By Saint Werburgh," cried Aubrey, "thou art become an absolute troubadour. Thou dost speak poesy, *De la Folie*, as it were homely prose, and flowers of minstrelsy, as they were aemaries and paternosters. Thou say'st I resemble a mendicant: but, i'faith, thou hast more the air of an harper, and wilt anon decorate thyself with the blue mantle and gilt chain. But away with thee to the king, and if thou dost hear aught, show thyself here again."

The knight quitted the monastery, and, mounting his horse, rode off, attended by his page.

Early the following morning the abbot Ingulphus prepared to attend the court; for which purpose he clothed himself in pontifical splendour, and put on his mitre, to which some writers affirm the

seat in parliament and spiritual peerage to have been appendant. But this appears to be a vulgar error; for there were many conventional prelates summoned to parliament who were not mitred, and some of the mitred prelates were not summoned, — a proof sufficiently demonstrative of the incorrectness of the supposition. Ingulphus, however, had received his writ of summons for many parliaments, both in the present and preceding reigns; although, from indisposition, either of body or mind, he had found it convenient to tender his apologies in lieu of appearing in person. And this was the practice of members of parliament in both houses, at this period; for so unhacknied were the paths of government as the tracks of ambition, that few laymen, except those engaged in the actual administration, could be found busying themselves in the affairs of state; and there are even petitions upon record by the burgesses of certain towns, imploring the king to disfranchise their boroughs, rather than

put them to the trouble and expense of sending representatives to parliament. For, as war and the pursuits of chivalry were alone thought worthy the attention of hot and high-spirited nobles, the reins of government were abandoned to the guidance of the priesthood, and even with them, at least in the higher branches of legislative economy centered in a few. But as it is not our intention to write a history of the constitution, a subject for which few have capability, we shall proceed without further delay, in that which is our peculiar province. In the reign of Edward the Third, and for many reigns subsequent, sessions of parliament were not held with that order, precision, and regularity for which they have since become remarkable. They were held in different quarters of the kingdom, as the convenience, pleasure, or caprice of the sovereign dictated; and were, in fact, little more than passive assemblies called together for the mere purpose of informing the king, what sums the country could

part with in aid of his expenses, (thus acting the part of a modern army-surgeon, who stands over the culprit while he is flogged, and regulates the maximum of punishment,) and of assisting him with their advice as to the best means for its collection. They met without debate ; the king's pleasure was signified to them, and his will was made law without opposition ; the parliament never proceeding further than to impose the confirmation of some charter upon the sovereign as the *quid pro quo* of their supplies. Many of the nobles (as we have before remarked) appeared, at the session, armed, and attended by their retainers ; but this hostile appearance, instead of portending any storm to the monarch, (except in times of actual rebellion) indicated only some private feud, with which he was not at all concerned, or if at all, merely as the *arbiter dissentionis*. Such a session was that held at Nottingham on Saint Luke's tide, in the year of our blessed Saviour 1330, whereat the Lord Abbot Ingulphus made

his appearance. He was attended to the castle, where the court was held, by his son, still wearing the habit of a palmer; and arrived at the point of time when the chancellor was about to open the session. The parliament was held in the hall of the castle, and not only the king and the two queens, together with the court attendants, the peers, and burgesses were present, but the hall was also crowded with as many of the knights, esquires, yeomen, and pages, as could make their way, and obtain standing, room. But this evil, which was soon felt, owing to a crowd of noxious exhalations filling the room which had not power to escape through the narrow windows, was, in part, remedied by the king, who ordered the poursuivants to clear the hall of those persons whose presence was not necessary. This command was not executed without many murmurs and subterfuges on the part of the expelled; but murmurs and artifice were found to be no protection against the steel lances of the guard, and the authoritative batons of the poursuivants.

The abbot, making his way through the ejected crowd, advanced to the foot of the throne, upon which sat the king, and his queen, the lovely Philippa, surrounded by the nobles ; and among those that were nearest to Edward were the Earl of Lancaster, Sir Walter Manny, Sir Raimonnet de la Folie, and others of his private adherents. Lancaster, with great cordiality, saluted the reverend father, and introduced him to the youthful sovereigns, by whom he was received with peculiar affection.

" We have long known thy fealty, Sir Abbot," said Edward, " and have yearned to behold thy person. Philip hath still thy son in warm remembrance."

" The high courage and noble daring of Sir Aubrey Marcel," said the young queen, with a commanding, but somewhat grave air, which was her characteristic manner, " can never be forgotten by any one that has witnessed his deeds of chivalry. Were honour and valiance dead in the world, both the one and the other might be raised again from his very ashes."

She threw a hasty glance upon the poursuivant, who had mingled with the crowd of courtiers and attendants surrounding the throne. The king's eyes took the same direction, and, at once, recognized his favourite knight through the folds of his disguise. But, observing the approach of Bertrand du Chatelet, who had hitherto been engaged in attendance upon Isabel at the other side of the hall, where the queen-mother had a separate chair and circle, he proceeded no farther in his notice of Sir Aubrey ; but resumed his conversation with the abbot. They were, however, interrupted by the marcher, who, shouldering his way through the throng of knights and nobles that encircled the royal pair, accosted the king in a loud and abrupt tone, little indicative of that respect which every subject shculd feel for his sovereign.

“ Good Morrow to King Edward,” cried Du Chatelet ; “ the wild hawk has all the joyance of the field, while our sovereign keeps house, like a lazy Benedictine;”

He glanced superciliously upon the abbot, and Ingulphus eyed him with equal scorn ; but the king, whose prudence was not inferior to his courage, and who knew the moment for avenging an insult was not always the time present, replied with admirable temper, and with a good-humoured smile, “ To thee, Sir Bertrand, we assign the care of our hawks and hounds, whilst we attend in person to the duties of our station, and the requests of our loving subjects. But, we beseech thee, talk not of the Benedictine’s laziness, whilst thou dost allow the holy Abbot Ingulphus to pay us his duty before thyself.”

“ My Lord Abbot !” said the marcher bowing sarcastically, “ I cry ye mercy ; I knew not we were honoured by thy presence.”

“ But so we are, Sir Marcher,” cried Philippa, severely, and with a kindling eye, “ both we that are thy sovereigns, and thyself. The brave and virtuous are an honour to all society.”

“ Right, royal lady,” replied the marcher, in the same strain of irony ; “ I

doubt it not ; and were his son, the hot brain'd poursuivant, here, we should be still more honoured, should we not ? ”

“ By the Virgin, proud lord, thou lackest ceremony,” exclaimed the queen, “ thou hast sure forgotten in whose presence thou dost stand ? ”

“ No, by the rood, not so,” returned the marcher, elevating his lip scornfully ; “ I know right well. Edward of Caernarvon was thy husband’s father, a noted fool, or all the world doth lie. Thine is the Earl of Hainault, than whom, so help me my good lance at need, with all his titles and his ancestry, I’d fainer be a Kentish yeoman, and live upon the produce of my land. Think ye an English Baron need doff his cap to these ? No, by my soul, I’d rather doff my head.”

With these scornful words the marcher strode away, and although many a hand grasped the dagger, and many an arm was stretched forth to seize the rebel, yet so wonder-struck were all the attendants at the bold impudence of Du Chatelet’s speech, that, before they could

shake off their astonishment, he had withdrawn to Queen Isabel's circle, and was safely ensconced among his own retainers. The king, though he uttered no word by which his feelings could be ascertained, burned with secret indignation, and Philippa, whose courage was of the most daring character, shook and turned pale with very rage. But Edward, soon recovering his recollection, tried with success to dispel the cloud upon his brow, and Philippa, following his example, retrieved her good-humour and suavity of disposition. It was, however, apparent that the marcher had made Queen Isabel and her party acquainted with the fracas, for she was frequently observed to turn towards the king's circle, and to burst forth into wild and obstreperous laughter. It happened, fortunately, that before this scene commenced, Sir Aubrey Marcel, with whose disguise Sir Walter Manny was acquainted, had been accosted by that knight, and, by him, conducted out of the hall, to a place better suited for unrestrained conversation; or, it is pro-

bable, so impetuous was the poursuivant's disposition, and so rooted his hatred of the marcher, that, though unarmed, he would at once have thrown off his disguise, and rushed upon his foe, whereby he must inevitably have sacrificed his life, without rendering a jot of service to the cause of his sovereign, or doing aught to revenge his particular injuries: for the marcher was always well armed and attended, and would, besides, have been seconded by Mortimer, whose power must have beat down all opposition. It was, therefore, with great joy that, upon looking round, the abbot perceived his son was not in the presence; but he had scarcely time to congratulate himself before Sir Aubrey and his friend Manny again made their appearance; and they were not long in hearing of the singular occurrence which had happened, and which had now become the theme of conversation throughout the hall. Sir Raimonnet de la Folie, who had been present, recounted to them the whole scene, and the poursuivant, long before he had concluded, endeavoured to escape,

and attach the body of the marcher for high treason, in the midst of his vassals and friends. But Sir Walter Manny, more cautious, retained him forcibly.

“ What, in the Virgin’s name, wouldst thou do ?” said the Hainaulter ; “ run thine head into jeopardy of being stricken off before nightfall ? and, Saint George help me ! as it would serve no end but thine own ruin and dishonour. Seest thou not King Edward ? his heart is as hot as thine, but his head is cooler. He will avenge himself : doubt it not. Thou hast, sure, forgot our conversation ?”

“ No, Manny, I have not,” replied Sir Aubrey. “ But shall this false traitor beard his sovereign to the face, and no one step forth to do him right ? No ; Jesu Christ uphold me, as I avenge this wrong.”

“ Were there a chance, Sir Aubrey,” said Manny, gravely, “ of avenging my sovereign’s honour at this time, no man would more freely adventure himself than I, nor should any one step before me in dragging this

ruffian to King Edward's feet, and making him crave mercy on his knee. But this is no place to attempt Du Chatelet, whose vassals crowd the hall, and who is backed by the queen and all her faction; we should but wreck ourselves on the rock, and thus lessen the number of mariners who have the charge of the royal fortunes."

By these and other arguments the poursuivant was at length calmed, and regained the command of his features and deportment, of which his passion had nearly deprived him. But he still continued dark and eager for revenge, continually gazing upon the proud marcher from beneath his hood, with a feeling similar to that of Achilles, when triumphing over the prostrate Trojan, and meditating his fatal wound.

"Comfort thee, Marcel," said the knight of Hainault, smiling; "I promise thee an opportunity of avenging thine own injuries and the king's dishonour. I am no prophet, but thou may'st credit me."

"And if thou do'st need further testimony," said Sir Raimonnet, "I will

insure thee. But peace, the chancellor is about to open the session."

The chancellor, who occupied a seat (immediately below the dais, or elevated part of the hall, upon which the king's throne was erected) formed of a sack containing the staple commodity of England, wool, now entered upon the business of parliament. The peers and burgesses, who all sat together upon long benches, extending from the chancellor's woolsack to the entrance of the hall, took their seats and went through their avocations with little ceremony and less discussion.

Some of our readers, remembering the outcry raised by the long parliament in the reign of Charles I., upon his entry into the house of commons in search of the five refractory members, whereby they affirmed their privileges to be broken, will, perhaps, conclude that we are committing an error in stating King Edward and his Queen to have been present at this session of parliament; but we assure such of them as shall have formed this opinion of our judgment, that what

we have above written was not without profound and ample consideration. Until the reign of Edward VI., when the ambitious projects of Somerset and Northumberland obliged them to pay some court to the commons of England, which they could not have done more effectually than by flattering their representatives, and increasing the force and obligation of their authority and privileges, the grand counsels of the nation differed little in form from the most ancient free court held in Great Britain, the Saxon wittenagemote ; for, as in that assembly, the king, lords, and commons sat together, exercising their rights in each others company, and the king's negative and affirmative “ le roy s'avisera,” and “ le roy le veut,” were often used in his very presence. Indeed, the former mode of expression appears to have been formed for the sole purpose of taking off that character of harshness which the negative of the sovereign, delivered in person, would naturally have borne ; and which, had he not been present, would have been

a matter of indifferent consequence. But from the time of Edward Tudor, when the dissensions of the protectorate gave the commons a novel authority unknown to their predecessors, the nation became alive to the advantages derivable from the increasing weight and respectability of their constituted representatives ; and though they were of too little importance in the reigns of Mary and Elizabeth, and of too great, for the safety of the state, in that of the first Charles, we may now say they have discovered the golden mean, and are the real bulwark of the constitution.

We shall not enter here into any detail of the transactions wherewith this parliament was occupied, those of our readers who are curious about the matter may satisfy their enquiries by a reference to the statute book. About noontide they broke up, or, to use the modern phrase, adjourned until the morrow, being unwilling to spend those hours in which they were accustomed to recreation, in hearing a repetition of matter which some did not care for, and others

did not understand. The circle of Queen Isabel first departed from the hall, the queen-mother paying a few compliments to her son and daughter-in-law, as she passed them in quitting her chair. But Edward staid to receive the congratulations of his subjects, and to converse with the more able and experienced of his council, an inclination which augured well of his future glory. His party was soon joined by the Earl of Lancaster, the Abbot Ingulphus, the Lords Stafford, Hereford, Montacute, and others of his friends, who saw with indignation the contemptuous manner in which the king and his young consort were treated by the queen-mother, and her faction. Many offers of assistance were tendered on the spot by the frank and gallant nobles, who, regardless of the consequences, would immediately have set up the royal banner in opposition to that of Isabel and Mortimer. But Edward, who had already taken his measures in secret, and had concerted a plan to humble the pride of his adversaries, resolutely, but graciously, declined their aid.

“ Though we pant,” cried the gallant youth, “ to lead our chivalry where they may gather laurels, it is not against our countrymen we should fight, but against a foreign foe. God grant us the means and opportunity, and we will not be wanting to our honour and duty.”

This speech, which in happier times was recollected, seemed to indicate in the young sovereign that course of military policy which he pursued so successfully in his French wars; and it is probable his acquaintance with the turbulent character of his subjects was so perfect, that he foresaw continued difficulties in his government, and impediments to his authority, unless he should employ their power and courage in war-like expeditions,— an expedient which his grandfather had tried with considerable success.

The nobles and attendants now retired to prepare for dinner, and the king, followed by his train, quitted the hall.

CHAP. XI.

But howsoe'er, no simple man that sees
This jarring discord of nobility,
This should'ring of each other in the court,
This factious bandying of their favourites,
But that it doth presage some ill event.

First Part, Henry VI.

THE court of King Edward, or, to speak more correctly, that of Queen Isabel, was over-run by the spies and creatures of Mortimer, to whom every action performed by the friends or attendants of the young sovereign was carefully and minutely related. But this system of vigilance was too apparent in its effects, to allow the king and his followers to remain long ignorant of the cause. Facts, which never could have transpired, but through this channel of espionage, were made a handle to accuse and imprison the adherents of king Edward, and to persecute them only; whilst the faction of Mortimer, though (as our readers will have seen in the

specimen of the marcher's ferocity) they were much more deserving of coercion, entirely escaped the rigours of the favourite's justice, and were even encouraged in their audacity. It is scarcely a subject of wonder, then, that the more cautious and sensible of the sovereign's train should hold themselves upon their guard in the presence of all persons that were not the assured and notorious friends of the monarch, and that, admitting of no neutrality, they should count those who did not heartily espouse their cause, in the number and character of their mortal foes. But though the line of distinction was virtually and accurately drawn, and there was no man on either side whose faction, to any one accustomed to the court, was not perfectly understood, as much so as though, like the feudists of York and Lancaster, they had borne the red and white symbols of party, yet all was effected by a tacit and sullen convention, by looks of haughty pride and indignant contempt, by an air and manner which, without words, forbade the slightest and

most superficial intercourse. When their contentions arrived at this issue, the spies of Mortimer, entirely excluded from the private meetings of the king's friends, found themselves incapable of gathering aught whereby they might continue their tyranny over the royalists, except from such exterior marks of impatience and indignant spirit as the young nobles of Edward's court could not refrain from indulging in ; and as these signs of impending wrath were much dreaded by the favourite, since they expressed the general opinion of the nation, and were, therefore, to be vigorously repressed, and as the new system of judicature, established by Mortimer, required no proof of facts alleged, but the voice merely of public opinion, which public opinion was deemed to emanate solely from their own faction, the king himself found it requisite to place a curb upon the virtuous and proper sympathies of his followers, and to make use of prevention in avoiding even a public intercourse (except in cases of state expediency) with the daring invaders of his

throne and privileges. But if this open rupture rendered the duration of power in either party precarious, it had an operation far from evil on the fortunes of the king; for it enabled him to concentrate, with greater facility, the supporters of his authority, and thus to distinguish, without a probability of deception, upon whom he might place his dependency, and devolve his confidence: and, moreover, as the knights and nobles who were admitted into his trust were all men of tried character, as well as undoubted courage, there was little occasion for that kind of select or cabinet council which is usually found necessary in cases of secret conspiracy. Thus, to all men of the royal party, the existence of Sir Aubrey Marcel was confided, and so soon as he arrived at court, he was recognised by his old companions with high marks of their esteem, and of their joy at his deliverance. It was not safe, however, to express either in public, and as Sir Walter Manny whispered to a circle surrounding the poursuivant, that the eye of a traitor might now be watch-

ing them, Sir Aubrey withdrew, and was conducted by his friend through a private passage to his own chamber, and thence, without returning into the common passages of the castle, to a hall used by the king for his own accommodation. They had scarcely entered the chamber when Edward and his lovely consort came from the great staircase, attended by their household. The king, without staying for Manny's introduction, upon which, according to etiquette, he was about to enter, looked round for the palmer, and having speedily distinguished him, pushed aside his attendants, and seized him by the hand. Sir Aubrey instantly threw aside his weeds, knelt down, and pressed his sovereign's palm respectfully to his lips.

“ Ha, Marcel !” exclaimed Edward ; — but his joy at beholding his old friend, his remembrance of past enjoyments and sorrows, his mingled emotions would not suffer him to proceed, and it was not without a struggle that the sweet draught of present pleasure overcame the bitter and choaking gulp of perfected losses

and unavailing grief. The poursuivant still retained the hand of his sovereign and bedewed it with tears, which were called forth by the review and association of images little differing from the retrospections of his master. At length the visage of Edward brightened, and, raising the knight from his knee, he said, “ What is past, Marcel, give to the winds ; for that which is to come, thou and we shall soon be better or worse ; a proud lord hath triumphed in thy ruin, and hath to day shown us a public and traiterous defiance. To thy sword we remit him, and to thine alone. Mark, lords, let no man but Marcel raise his hand against the marcher : thine shall be the honour of his conquest, and it is a honour, caitiff as Du Chatelet is ; for had’st thou not risen from the dead, by Saint Edward we had reserved him to our proper weapon.”

“ And by avenging thine own injuries, Sir Poursuivant,” cried the queen, with great vivacity and enthusiasm, “ thou wilt redeem the honour of thy sovereign,

and chastise the betrayer of thy mistress."

" Ha, holy Virgin!" cried the knight, whilst his brow flushed with rage, and the large tear-drop burst from his eye, " would we were in the lists, and he with all advantages. Helmless, shieldless, and without my spurs, tied to one weapon, let the fight be soon, and I will meet him with rapture surpassing that I felt in the hour I knew I was beloved. If I do not conquer him, reverse my arms, bind me astride the barrier, try all means of disgrace upon me, and invent new, to proclaim to the world I am a coward that cannot fight under such injuries as I have suffered."

" Thou hast, indeed, suffered unheard-of misery," said the young king, " but it shall be avenged."

" Avenged it shall be, as I trust in God," cried the knight, " yet by no hand but mine. If this arm be not able to chastise the oppressor, in the name of heaven let him go free. Let my wrongs perish with my life; it is the judgment of God."

“ Amen !” cried the king solemnly ;
“ I make mine avow to the Swan and
Peacock, * it shall be as thou sayest. But
now, lords, to dinner. We will after-
wards confer on the subject nearest our
hearts. Come, holy palmer, thy piety
doth give thee privilege to sit high at
the board, be thou by me. Cousin of
Lancaster, and right gay gallant Raimon-
net de la Folie, pray ye, sirs, attend our
queen. Sturdy Ralph Stafford, be thou
our sewer. Bohun, Nevil, and Monta-
cute, do ye your parts. Our portion of
meat, by Saint Basil, is but scanty. The

* When Edward the First was setting out on his last expedition to Scotland, he knighted his eldest son and several other young noblemen with great solemnity. At the close of the whole (says Matthew of Westminster, p. 454) “ Allati sunt in pom-
paticâ gloria duo cygni vel olores ante regem, pha-
lerati retibus aureis vel fistulis deauratis, desidera-
bile spectaculum intuentibus. Quibus visis, Rex
votum vovit Deo cœli et cygnis se proficisci in
Scotiam mortem Johannis Comyn et fidem læsam
Scotorum vivus sive mortuus vindicaturus.” So in
the Prol. to the Contin. of Chaucer’s Cant. Tales,
the Hosteller says, “ I make a vow to the peacock
ther shall wake a foule mist.”

purveyors of King Mortimer eat up the country."

"And the country," said Montacute, "will soon swallow him and all his faction, or I am deceived."

"Sir Humphrey Bohun," said the queen, "where are thy brother, and Sir Robert Ufford? I saw them not in the parliament nor elsewhere to day."

"Better service, sovereign lady," replied Sir Humphrey, "are Ufford and William Bohun doing our cause than we that are present. They are warning friends, and setting fire to the pile which shall consume your enemies."

"Who has seen Eland to day?" said the king.

"I have, my liege," replied Walter Manny, "and he will attend you at vespers. He might not come before without hazarding suspicion."

The king and queen, the lords and knights now severally took their places at table, the royal pair choosing to dispense with that etiquette which forbade a subject to sit at meal with his sovereign, and, unlike the sultan, who, when he

had invited his courtiers to familiarity, could not brook the proof of their obedience, Edward appeared the humblest of the company, and enjoyed the freedom of his friends with a greater relish than the haughty despot the cringing servility of his vassals. His principal intercourse was with Sir Aubrey Marcel, who occupied a seat beside him, and into whose eventful history he entered with a particularity and minuteness of enquiry, which disclosed a tender solicitude and real sensibility on his behalf, and which, had the poursuivant been a stranger to him, must have entirely won his heart and service. But as the case stood, it was impossible to augment that feeling of love and veneration which occupied the breast of the knight for his royal master, whose ardency and constancy of friendship he had often experienced, and had never forgotton.

Neither the king nor his consort were fond of the luxuries of the table. Their meal was therefore plain and soon discussed, and they retired in order to enter upon the momentous article of their

meeting. Happily they were liable to no interruption, for though the retainers of Queen Isabel and Mortimer within the castle were more than five times the number of those attached to the king, yet they had not proceeded so far as to throw off the mask entirely and strip him of his crown, nor as to encroach upon his privacy. They took sufficient care to prevent a public opposition to their authority, and they had, therefore, the less prudence and foresight to guard against a private attack. They allowed the sovereign his separate guards and officers, who, being stationed at the passages to his apartments, were capable of giving notice of an enemy's approach, if they were not strong enough to repel his entry.

Several hours were spent in relating plans which had been formed for the destruction of Mortimer's faction, most of which had proved abortive in the design, or impossible in the execution, or in the invention of new ones, for which Sir Raimonnet de la Folie possessed a wonderful facility. But these, unhappily,

as their predecessors, were too romantic to be attempted with a probability of success, or were liable to be discovered to the enemy by some loop-hole which the gallant knight in his intemperate zeal had overlooked or forgot. Wearied, at length, with forming modes which nobody approved, the French knight gave up the task to those of his companions who were more experienced in real and dangerous warfare, and contented himself with relating the fashions and shows of the French court to the queen, who, though unwilling to offend him by absolute indifference, paid no more attention to his remarks than common decency and gratitude for his exertions required.

"But there is one among us," said the Earl of Lancaster, after giving his opinion, "who has said nothing. The man most competent, from his experience and success in arms, to instruct, has not ventured a word on the subject. Sir Aubrey Marcel, let us hear thy counsel."

"So please ye, my lords," replied the poursuivant, "I had rather be silent

till I have heard the counsel of Sir William Eland, the constable.—I know not the nature of the ground, the number of Mortimer's retainers, the force we may depend on, nor the advantages we enjoy. And though Eland be for us, yet hath he no power in the castle, garrisoned, as it is, by the vassals of their faction.”

This reply instantly clipped the plumes of those enthusiastic knights who were about to carry the castle *vi et armis*, unwitting of opposition, and threw a shade of melancholy over the features of Edward himself, who knew that, of all men, Marcel was the last to be daunted by dangers and difficulties, and one who would not have cast a doubt upon a case remotely capable of success. He looked stedfastly in the face of the poursuivant, and said, in a solemn and marked tone, “Marcel, thy words, I confess, have chilled my heart; for I have known thee, and so have we all, as a man whose courage was so far from holding him back in the race of honour, that it has rather been too full of rashness, and has forced thee

upon adventures where the peril was imminent, though the reward and the necessity of their execution were not apparent. Answer then fairly. — Seest thou no hope of our freedom? Must we despair, without striking a blow?"

" Saint Mary forbid!" replied the poursuivant, with enthusiasm; " were our only dependence upon the valour of the knights present, I, as Sir Raimonnet, would stake my life upon the issue."

" Mark ye, nobles," cried the French gallant, " the valiant croissader doth wear my symbol at last. Ye must all come to this pass."

" But so desperate a game," continued Sir Aubrey, without commenting upon the interruption of de la Folie, " is not to be hazarded until all other means have failed. I said the constable could have no power in the castle, because, as I have learned to day, it is filled with the retainers of the Earl of March, who will only admit such a number of armed men within the walls, as would have no chance of successful combat against his own fol-

lowers. But still, despair not, for Sir William Eland is a good soldier, and may devise some stratagem that may serve us full better than open force."

He had scarcely concluded, when the constable was announced at the door of the hall, and entered the chamber wrapped closely in his mantle, in such a guise as it was then common for the young gallants of the court to use for concealment in their amours, and which, as it was common, took away all chance of suspicion. Sir William, moreover, was a young man, of showy habits, and a handsome person, so that, had he, by any disaster, been discovered, it would merely have been supposed that he was attached to some lady attendant upon the queen, and was desirous of concealing his intrigue. Edward received him with great kindness, and immediately entered into the nature of their consultation.

"Eland!" said the young sovereign, "we have been anxiously awaiting thy arrival. To-night our fate is fixed. We must either resolve on a bold exploit, or

consent to remain the slaves of Mortimer. Thou alone canst guide us, and to thee we confide our lives and honour."

"The Virgin uphold me," replied the constable, "as I uphold both;—they are dearer to me than mine own. But I would know, my liege, whether you have raised the strength we talked of?"

"Sir Robert Ufford and Sir William Bohun," returned the king, "are now about it."

"I will answer for them and their followers," said Sir Humphrey Bohun; "they will be in the neighbourhood to-night; and let but Sir William find us in an inlet to the castle, we will gladly consent to be the villains of Mortimer for the rest of our lives, if he escape."

"The achievement, sirs, will be right hardly won," returned the constable; "for Mortimer's kinsman, Sir William Trumpington, hath come in to-night with fifty followers. These must be provided for, ere we stir in the matter."

"Let not that concern ye," said the poursuivant; "for at the Benedictines we have forty as tall fellows as ever wielded

lance or mace of arms. But this, Sir Constable, is not our present concern.—We have first to learn how we ourselves may gain entry to the chamber of Mortimer, without alarming him or the guard.—If this may be done, there is little doubt of success.”

“ Ye may gain the antichamber by a way I know,” replied Sir William ; “ but as the chambers of the queen and her ladies open into it, as well as those of the Earl of March and many of his friends, the watch hold there their guard, and could not be surprised.”

“ By what way, good Eland,” said the king, “ may we gain that room ? If our followers may enter, the field is our own.”

“ They may, my liege !” replied the constable ; “ for the road I speak of is a secret passage, cut out of the rock from the castle to a distance without the town, and has been used, in ancient days, for relief in time of siege. It is known but to me and some few others, and the inlet will bring ye into the ward-chamber. There ye must fight or fly.”

"Would it were come to that!" said Edward, smiling; "but who holds the keys of the castle?"

"They are nightly carried to Queen Isabel," answered the constable, "who, it is said, hides them beneath her pillow."

"Know ye where the marcher, Bertrand du Chatelet, hath his lodgings?" said Sir Aubrey.

"Adjoining the chamber of the Earl of March," replied Eland, "and Trumpington, steward of the household, and Sir John Monmouth on the other side. They are all deadly men in combat, and are well accompanied."

"So much the better," cried the king. "If we are doomed to a struggle for our throne, in the name of heaven let our foes be gallant men that will grace our conquest."

They were now, unexpectedly, joined by Sir William de Bohun, Sir Robert Ufford, and Sir William Clinton, who had absented themselves from the court and parliament for the purpose of raising a power to second their designs in case of a successful attack upon Mortimer,

and as a reserve, if their adventure should prove abortive. The information communicated by the constable to the king was opened to them, and they, in return, laid before Edward the number of adherents whom they had either already collected, or from whom they had pledges of support,— a strength more than sufficient to answer every purpose meditated.

“ Then we have nought to do,” said the poursuivant, “ but to cry ‘ St. George!’ and set on.”

“ But the time,” said the Earl of Lancaster, “ we have yet to fix. It is too late to prepare our retainers to-night; but to-morrow —”

“ Let it be to-morrow night,” said the king. “ It may not be later, for Hastings and Berkeley are coming hither to join with March. Some fears have they that a design is on foot. Their guilt, sirs, makes them cowardly ; but if we delay our enterprize, they will lose their terror, and their faction will grow stronger and more audacious. To-morrow we will quit the castle with our followers, and

retire, as for dalliance, some distance from the town. This will abate their suspicion, and enable us to draw together our strength, without fear of raising their apprehensions. But where, Sir William, is the outlet?"

"Nigh to the monastery of Black Friars," replied the constable, "some five hundred paces without the walls."

"At the Black Friars, then," returned Edward, "will we keep our court. There, lords, we shall expect ye with your followers harnessed for battle when the vespers chime. Thou, Eland, wilt be in readiness to conduct us, and as the time is now come when the Earl of March must either perihs or wear the crown, it is meet we should come to this adventure as though we were in the plain field, eager for death or victory. Thou, cousin of Lancaster, gallant poursuivant, good Walter Manny, and brave gentlemen, we need not say to ye, be bold and chivalrous, for so ye have ever been; but let your caution o'ertop your valour, and keep our counsel till the hour be ripe. Have all your vassals ready for the

time, but keep them dark as to your intentions : that so their idle speech may not betray, and thus destroy our project. Now, friends, good night—be active and be watchful.”

The queen, then, with much courtesy, bade a good night to all, and retired to rest. Sir Aubrey Marcel, and Sir Walter Manny, with the other knights attendant upon the king, marshalled his way to the bed-chamber ; whilst the Earl of Lancaster, Sir William Montacute, and the rest, after severally kissing the king’s hand, retired from the castle.

CHAP. XII.

While the tinker did dine, he had plenty of wine,
Rich canary with sherry and tent superfine :
Like a right honest soul, faith, he took off his bowl,
Till at last he began for to tumble and roul
From his chair to the floor, where he sleeping did
snore,
Being seven times drunker than ever before.

PERCY's *Reliques.*

OUR readers must, for a while, condescend to stoop from the king to the beggar, from the sovereign of England to the heretofore mendicant, brother Adrian, and his fellows, who, within the hospitable walls of the Benedictine convent, had found good quarters and excellent fare, two conveniences which the crociarius had neither the asperity nor the philosophy to despise. The monks attached to the abbot Ingulphus, and the knights and gentleman of his train, were well accommodated in

the guest-room with their master, whilst the yeomen and domestics, if not so ceremoniously, were equally well provided for in the kitchen of the monastery. And it soon appeared that the guests of the kitchen had a larger share of the good things stored in the buttery, at the same time that they enjoyed infinitely more freedom, and a greater latitude of debauch, than their friends in the hospitularia ; and this discovery, were it but for the privilege of using their own measure in tasting the abbot's double ale, made many of the upper guests, and, among the rest, brother Adrian, long for the festivities of the kitchen. It may easily be divined that the desire of the cross-bearer did not long remain ungratified ; for, on the day following their arrival, when the loud wassail of the yeomanry could be heard into the guest-room, he invented a plausible story about consulting Waldeyff on some occasion relative to the baggage, and retiring with the consent of Ingulphus, made no stay on the road until he had reached the scene of unrestrained hil-

rity. There he found Alan Waldeyff and his comrades, seated at an enormous board, sufficiently capacious to feast not only the yeomanry of Ingulphus's train, but also his domestics, together with those of their own house ; and the table having been cleared of the meat, to which the guests had done ample justice, was now covered with flagons of nut-brown ale, in horns of which the granger and his mates drank foaming bumpers to the health of the twain abbots and the gallant poursuivant d'amour. Waldeyff had his horn raised to his mouth as Adrian peeped in at the door, which he held in his hand, half open, whilst he surveyed the company. He fixed his eyes upon Alan, who, attracted by the opening of the door, to which he sat opposite, returned the glance quite as eagerly, and with as narrow scrutiny. At length, observing that Adrian did not move, he cried with a loud voice, “ Holloa ! Father Adrian ! Is it thou or the devil in thy black cope that come to spy into our wassail ? ”

But receiving no answer, he said to one of his comrades, “ Ho, Baldwin, hand me thy bow and shaft, and cry *a mort!* good fellow.”

“ Hold thy hand, knave,” cried the cross-bearer, entering the room in great alarm at this menace ; “ thou hadst better shoot at the king’s hart royal proclaimed, than at a holy Benedictine.”

“ Oh ! it is thee, is’t ?” cried the granger. “ I trowd I had spied the devil’s horns beneath thy cowl, and a long tail and broad hoof under thy cope. But come, sirs, make room for the friar, —the devil, — I mean the monk, — the benedictine, — Father Adrian. Sit, holy father, and give us thy relish of this fat ale. ’Twould make a man tunbellied in a month, though he were as lean as a crane, and as sad livered as a cormorant.”

“ Thou knowest, son Alan,” replied the cross-bearer, with affected gravity, “ that I have now put off that wild and riotous gaiety, which, with sorrow I confess, did once disgrace my character. But I was then a mendicant, and followed

but the rules of the order ; now I am a monk professed, it is time for me to reform my living, and become a Benedictine in holiness of life, and austerity of discipline.”

“ Ha, ha, ha !” ejaculated the granger, “ thou hast but few steps to make then ; for an ass has the same form as a horse, save that he has longer ears and a switch tail. Your Benedictine, Sir Cross-bearer, knows the smack of good wine and a wench’s lip, as well as any friar within the pope’s governance. So seat thyself, my buxom priest, and take thy first draught of Nottingham ale. Thou may’st travel ten counties and not meet with its mickle.”

“ Say’st thou so ?” returned the cross-bearer. “ If ’twere not unorthodox for a monk to drink ale, by Saint Thomas I would.”

“ I will be thy pardoner,” cried Waldeyff, “ and absolve thee from the sin — thy penance shall be to return to thy company in the guest-room, if thou dost not think that too hard.”

The cross-bearer, without more gri-

mace, seated himself beside Waldeyff, and taking up a cup of ale, drank it off with an air of wonderful zest and pleasure. His eyes watered, accustomed, as he was, to strong potations, with the strength of the liquor, and the depth of the cup, from which he did not take his lips until he could plainly discern the bottom. It was neither “vile sabinum” nor drunk “modicis cantharis;” but such ale as would have forced Boniface to confess that, in comparison with it, his anno domini was but small beer. The granger, who watched with eager eyes the draught of his companion, clapped him on the shoulder, and cried, “Well, old tough-weasand! what thinkest thou of the abbot’s ale? Is’t not better than your clearaway, and your galrigashes, and your malversy, and I know not what else that are as washy and cold to a yeoman’s stomach, as so much snow-water in a winter’s night? Eh! friar — monk, — what say’st thou?

“I am of thine opinion, worthy granger,” replied the mendicant, upon whose faculties the huge drench had al-

ready made an inroad ; “ give wine to the monks ; no, by Saint Barnaby, I am a monk now myself : give wine to the devil, and good ale, like this, to all honest fellows. Alan, most noble yeoman, — though, by the way, that is a lie ; for a yeoman cannot be noble ; and so most excellent granger fill me another cup.”

“ If thou wert not too drunk to understand,” — replied Waldeyff.

“ Drunk ! thou malapert knave,” exclaimed the offended cross-bearer ; “ think’st thou I am to be made drunk with a single cup ? Body o’mee, thou may’st talk when I have had a score ; and so, honest lad, proceed to thy demonstration.”

“ If thou wert not too drunk to understand,” said Waldeyff, repeating his words, without noticing the depreciation of Father Adrian, “ I would.”

“ Thou liest, churl,” cried the cross-bearer, starting from his seat, and grasping the empty cup in such a way as made Waldeyff imagine he intended using it as a missile, “ I am as sober as ever thy mother

was chaste, or thy father honest ! What ! would'st thou assail my reputation by saying one cup hath made me drunk ? By Saint Dunstan, I will drink with thee for thy head ? ”

“ No, marry, I will not wager my head against thine,” answered Waldeyff, “ because the loss of mine own might be some inconvenience, whilst, by winning thy cranion, I should gain nothing ; but I will drink with thee cup and cup for a gold besantine.”

“ Have at thee,” cried Adrian, filling his horn, which he could scarcely guide steadily to his mouth, “ I will show thee what it is to encounter a mendicant — that is, a Benedictine, at the wassail.”

Again he applied the cup to his mouth, and drained it to the dregs, whilst his adversary, tipping the wink to his companions, drank only a small quantity which had been left in the bottom of his horn, and replaced it on the board with a loud aspiration, as though the draught had nearly deprived him of breath, a circumstance which did for a short time virtually befall the cross-bearer.

"There!" exclaimed Waldeyff, "fill again, old pull-hearty. Thou shalt find thou hast given the challenge to no craven. I will match thee, if it be till this time to-morrow."

Father Adrian, at this exclamation, rubbed his eyes, and, applying them closely to the granger's face, endeavoured to trace in it the marks of confirmed ebriety. But, unfortunately, his senses were altogether bewildered; and he could not, without much difficulty, recognize the lineaments of Waldeyff's visage.

"This ale is strong, confounded strong," said Adrian, when he found himself puzzled; "one has need of the Paschal taper * to make out one's nearest friends."

"Ha! dost confess?" cried Waldeyff, obstreperously, "thou art but a sucking-calf for all thy bellowing, and knowest no more of handling a full horn, than

* The Paschal taper, placed before the high alter at Easter, sometimes weighed 300 lbs., and was supported by a wooden frame. — *Nicholl's Expenses of Ancient Times.*

thou dost of thy missal or singing-book ;
and I wot that's but little.”

“ By Saint Chad, thou art a lying—
and a filthy—and a debauch'd knave,”
returned the monk, with a pause between
each adjective, “ as ever wore blue
jerkin and clouted shoon. Grace of my
body, but thou art a liar.”

“ Which is to say, I am none,”
answered the granger; “ for neither body
nor soul of thine have a whit of grace to
save thee from the devil.”

“ I am a sinful man—Heaven be
blessed,” continued the cross-bearer, with
drunken solemnity; “ I have had my
fill of good ale.”

“ Ay, thy skin is pretty well soaked,”
said Waldeyff; “ thou hast drunk a
Winchester gallon to thine own share.”

“ And the abbot, perdie, is a noble
man,” pursued Adrian; “ for he keeps
noble liquor.”

“ As thy present state doth well
avouch,” said the granger.

“ A right noble man—and right noble
liquor,” said the holy father, gently
dropping into a doze, and continuing to

repeat the words until his recollection was entirely subdued by sleep.

“ There he goes !” cried Waldeyff, laughing aloud ; “ by the mort, sirs, if I had taken down such an ocean of ale, it would have drowned me out and out.”

The conversation was here broken off by a loud noise, the trampling of horses, glancing of lights, and ringing of arms at the porch of the abbey, whereat the sub-porter, starting from the table, departed to learn their desires, and the acolythi and other inferior officers providing themselves with torches, prepared to do the duties of reception, if the horsemen should prove permanent visitors. Their occupations were not long suspended, for they were instantly summoned by a loud cry of “ Lights, lights !” and, leaving Waldeyff and his companions to enjoy themselves, they quitted the kitchen. The yeomen could plainly hear the riders dismount and enter the abbey, whilst their horses were conducted by the domestics to the stables of the monastery. A very short time elapsed before the acolythi returned, conducting

several men, the first of whom was our Cambrian hero, Griffith Merodoc, armed to the teeth. The granger and he recognized each other with reciprocal pleasure, Waldeyff exclaiming, “What! my man of the mountains!” and the seneschal muttering with his eyes half closed “Among friends! Among friends! Py Saint David — well, and how does the wind plow, Master Granger? and how are all our friends, high and low, gentle and simple, priest and penitent?”

“ Right well,” answered Waldeyff; “but some of them, as thou seest, are drunk.”

He clapped father Adrian on the shoulder and shouted in his ear; but his endeavours to arouse him were entirely fruitless.

“ Let him sleep, let him sleep,” said the Cambrian; “he will pe soper when he awakes.”

“ Ay, and drunk again soon after,” returned the granger; “but I wot thou hast brought Sir Paschal Marcel with thee.”

“ Ay, or he has wrought me with

him," replied Merodoc. " His nephew's safety hath made him young again, I believe, for he has nigh shaken the preath out of my pody py hard riding. Here, you knave, take my harness—and give me, I pray you for Saint Charity, a cup of your liquor."

One of the Cambrian's followers speedily divested him of his armour, and Waldeyff presented him with a horn of ale, which he drank with a grace and ease worthy of the crociarius.

" A vynno vîd yn Gryv—yved Gwrw," cried the Welshman, smacking his lips and setting down the cup; " he that would pe strong and hearty, let him drink ale —

' 'Tis good for him when he is well,
And good for him when he is pad;
'Tis good for him when he is merry,
And good for him when he is sad.'

Put what news is stirring? Is King Edward yet come to years of discretion? Is it likely he will pe aple to govern py himself, without the cares and assistances of the Earl of March and his worshipful mother?"

"I' faith, if thou be'st curious in that particular," said the granger, "thou must away to court and make inquiry; for I know as much about King Edward's matters as King Edward himself knows of me or thee."

"A right noble man!" ejaculated father Adrian, who still slept and dreamed the words over again which he had uttered when falling asleep. But Waldeyff, upon whose intellects the liquor had not failed of operating, fancied the cross-bearer's repose was merely pretended, and that he made a jest of him under the cloak of affecting to speak in his sleep. This idea roused his wrath, and, turning to the recumbent monk, he said, with great emphasis—

"Thou fool! what have I to do with the feuds of kings and princes? If the lord to whom I owe service bid me march, here I am ready for the field, and I will not halt nor flee for the devil himself, if he come in the shape of a foe. But thou knowest no more of true liegeance than this cup of ale."

"Right noble liquor!" concluded Adrian.

"To the fiend with thee," cried the enraged granger, striking the monk with his foot, which forced him from the bench to the floor; "drunken beast! lie like a hog in the dirt."

But the fall awoke the cross-bearer, whom sleep had by this time rendered somewhat sober, and after stretching himself, and giving half a dozen yawns, he arose from the ground and retook his seat. The Welshman (whom he did not perceive, although he sat beside him, being seized with that listless and benumbing drowsiness which frequently accompanies sleep when taken out of the usual course,) took no notice of him; but filled his cup and said, "Drink healths."

Adrian started as though he had been seized with a convulsive spasm, and, turning round, beheld at his side the figure of his old acquaintance. He rubbed his eyes, shook his head, as if to resettle his senses, and then, with solemn earnestness, said, "If thou be'st not

Sathanus in the shape of one Griffith Merodoc, or if thou be'st that honest Welshman himself, I conjure thee speak."

The granger could not resist the awe-struck manner and profound gravity of tone with which Adrian accompanied his invocation ; but, springing from his seat, roared with laughter, and hooted the poor monk till weariness obliged him to desist. Merodoc neither laughed nor spoke, but archly threw his face into numerous contortions, which avowed his apprehension of the joke to be little inferior to that of the yeoman. Adrian bore all with patience, and preserved his temper and moderation with a truly Christian and philosophic spirit.

" Now thou art wearied with thy boisterous laughter," said the crociarius, calmly, " doth it please thee to acquaint us with the cause ? for, of a truth, I see not the matter, nor where it doth lie."

" Lie !" said the granger, " why, thou tramping priest, it doth lie in this : thou dost owe me a gold besantine, and I would have thee pay me."

" I owe thee a besantine ! marry for

what?" replied Father Adrian ; "I never bought thy beef, and I'll swear thou didst never lend me."

"But thou didst hold me a gold besantine that thou could'st outdrink me ; did'st a not?" said Waldeyff ; "and I had thee drunk in a trice, and under the table, whilst I was as sober as a judge."

"By our Lady," said Adrian, "I remember somewhat of that thou sayest ; thou didst conquer, sure enough ; but I have nought to pay thee withal, and so thou must give me a day."

"I'faith, 'twill be the hallidome, then," returned Waldeyff ; "but if thou dost not redeem thyself before then, thou shalt bear the burthen of my sins."

"A bargain," cried the monk ; "then thy sins and the besantine are mine ; so no more on't, if thou would'st not have them break my back. But now for thee, Sir Seneschal : where didst thou spring from ? and where is thy master, Sir Paschal ?

"Too many puddings, look you, will choke a dog, holy father," replied the Seneschal. "I am here, thou seest, and

my master is where he should pe. It is not safe, nor discreet, nor judicious, to make disclosures and discoveries to drunken, and depauched, and foolish persons. I should not have peen as I am to-day, if I could not have kept a secret from a priest. We are not at confession either, Sir Monk."

"Sir Monk—Sir Devil!" cried the cross-bearer, in a fury. "Why dost thou holy father me, who, as thou knowest, have no whit of holiness about me? Dost thou tell me at this time of day thou wottest how to keep a secret, when I know from the Lord Abbot Ingulphus twenty times more than thou dost, with all thy master's confidence; ay, more than himself? And is this the reward thy master sends to the man who sayed the life of his—"

The granger, to whom Adrian had turned his back, threw his arms round him, and stopped his mouth, saying, "By the Virgin, I wot thou art at confession now, and thou would'st let out more than hangs on thine own life. Have a care, holy father; the Lord Abbot will

little thank ye for putting the lives of his friends in jeopardy."

The granger, with prudent precaution, interrupted the speech of the cross-bearer, lest, among the domestics of the abbey, there should be any spy of Mortimer's, or any traitor, who, for the sake of reward, would reveal the poursuivant's existence to his foes. But the action with which he accompanied the word, was little calculated to restore the hot spirit of the holy father to moderation. It, in fact, increased the symptoms of his passion, and he sprang from his seat, grasped a brown bill, which belonged to one of the officers of the abbey, who was reposing snugly in a corner, and threatened to prostrate the first man who should presume to deride or make a jest of him.

"Ye have seen me do somewhat before now," he cried, with great bitterness; "but, by St. Dunstan, the feats I did under the walls of Malpas, shall be but as wrought by the flail of the thresher, if ye play not your parts the better."

"Ha, ha, ha!" cried Waldeyff, rising from his seat, and retreating to the other

side of the table ; “ the feats thou didst under Malpas’ barbican ! why, who saw thee do aught ? who saw thee strike one stroke while the fight lasted ? I watched thee, and well I marked thy horse had his bit slackened, and his head to the south.”

This assertion, delivered with confidence, put the finishing stroke to the rage of the monk, who attempted to throw the weapon he held at his adversary, but his strength failing with the *vehemence* of his passion, he fell *on* the bench, kicking and slavering like a mad beast. But this stage of his distemper did not last ; he rose again, and walking up to the Welshman, appealed to him for the truth or falsehood of the granger’s declaration. “ Speak, Griffith Merodoc,” he exclaimed aloud, “ if thou art gifted with the truth and honour of a Briton, if thou dost abhor a liar, and would not be held one thyself, if thou hast ever struck gallant stroke in the field, and if thou would’st hope the valiant poursuivant should avenge his wrongs by his sharp sword, by all these circumstances together, and

by each one in particular, I conjure thee to speak ; and speak not jestingly, but the truth in all things. Did I do fairly and manfully my devoir at Malpas ? or did I, as this shameless traitor says, prove craven and recreant ? Now then, sir, without favour.”—

“ Py Saint Tavid,” replied the Welshman, “ you do make a grave and a serious question of that which I believe was meant as a jest. Put, as you do force me by your solemnities to give my true opinion, I must declare and agree, that at Malpas you proved yourself a gallant man of your hands, a stout soldier, yes, indeed, truth you did.”

“ There, there, thou meal-sack full of lies !” cried the cross-bearer, with vociferous triumph ; “ thou dusty-footed churl, dost hear ? the word of an unprejudiced man, of an able soldier, who hath stricken in more fields of war than thou hast in fields of labour ; a proper judge and marshal in feats of chivalry, thou unhousel'd beast ; and an honest man to boot, thou alms-begging knave.”

“ Thou dost well to rate a man for

begging alms," said the granger, " who hast been an alms-beggar all thy days, and must have died in thy sins but for people's charity. Thou hast been overwell dealt withal ; success in thy vocation hath made thee dainty. But when, prithee, didst thou learn I had taken up the trade thou hast doff'd so lately?"

" Go to with thy trade," replied Father Adrian, " I know thee not but for a lying withersake ; a base pilfering waster and drawlatch ; a cutting ribald moss trooper, and doer of ran and rapine ; a common lecher and brawler ; and an intaker to all the thieves of the border. Thou hast more sins than there are names to call them by ; and Satan himself had never half thine impudence. The only thing in thy reputation is, that thou wilt do a daring deed, too wicked for a better man to undertake, and—"

" And yet," said the granger, interrupting the invective of the angry priest, " if I would put a besantine into thy hand, and say, ' Now, old pardoner, let us have thine absolution,' I dare swear thou wouldst not withhold it."

"No more I would, lad," cried Adrian, bursting into a loud laugh, and grasping the granger's hand, "for, trust me, when a man parts with his money in discharge of his sins, it is odds but he hath a hot touch of compunction, and well deserves absolution. What sayest thou, Sir Seneschal?"

"Every pody to his trade!" replied Merodoc; "I know no more of your suptilties and your mysteries than the plessed Virgin knows of a Cheshire cheese. Put, nevertheless, it appears to me, look you, that if every man may discharge his guilt and his crimes by the payment of money, there will pe no end nor pause in the oppressions and cruelties of those who are peyond the reach and the power of worldly punishment and vengeance, look you."

"Ha!—Saint Francis!—keep thy tongue silent on that subject, Griffith Merodoc," said Adrian, "if thou wouldest not be thought a heretic, like them of the spawn of the Manichæans and Albigen-ses. What thou hast uttered doth savour of a controversial spirit, and doth arraign

the practice of holy church, which is perfect and infallible. Set not up thy vain and earthly judgment against that which is perfect wisdom, and the direct inspiration of the holy saints, and Saviour of the world ; for to Saint Peter was delegated the power of the keys, the remission of sin, and its penalty ; and from him hath the inexhaustible well of absolution descended to the head of the church, the holy father of the Christian faith. Beware, then, how ye speak. Damnation hangs upon a doubting spirit.”

The introduction of theological disquisition soon banished all enjoyment from the company ; and they shortly afterwards retired to rest, little gratified with the conclusion of their wassail.

CHAP. XIII.

Yea, I swear, Saint Aldegond, the throe of guilt
Sobbed from her bosom audible and deep ;
The flush of shame mantled her forehead ;
And the wild, tremulous, and imperfect accents
Of sin detected dropped from her utterance.

Citizen of Marseilles.

THE following morning all was bustle at the castle, which Edward, Phillipa, and their attendants were preparing to leave.

Queen Isabel and Mortimer, although they strove to disguise their gratification, received the king's notification of his purpose with unmixed pleasure ; and gave every facility and accommodation to those who were engaged in removing the royal wardrobe, armoury, mews, and stud. Isabel, however, fearful of adding new cause of irritation to that which Edward had already experienced, assumed, on his departure, a melancholy and dissatisfied aspect ; and affected to

reproach him for abandoning her society. “ Wherefore dost thou quit us, son Edward ?” she exclaimed, as though in anger ; “ art thou already wearied of our company, and that of thy faithful barons ?”

“ No, madam,” replied Edward, drily ; “ we are not wearied of the company of our faithful subjects — it is only of those that are not faithful that we are weary — we go thither where we shall be esteemed a sovereign — our splendour and authority have here been too much divided. The sun’s full body hath a gorgeous majesty ; but when his rays are parted, he doth shine weak, undazzling and unworthy.”

“ Not so, fair son,” replied the wary queen ; “ for the sun’s whole vigour doth overwhelm and destroy, whilst his rays, diminished by a passing cloud, do shine more temperately, and yet as healthful. Splendour’s a bauble — ”

“ Ay, and so it is,” returned the king, with a touch of displeasure in his eye ; “ and yet, fair mother, Roger Mortimer doth dazzle by his splendour, not his

merit. Let my fair fame be blazoned through the world, and I'll not care though my palace be a cottage, and my retainers the wild fox and mountain roe. Let March beware—he doth march upon his ruin."

The grave and bitter tone with which Edward uttered this denunciation, paled the roses in the cheeks of the amorous queen, who breathed short and quick with apprehension. But she looked around, and observing the unarmed and defenceless state of the king's attendants, and their weak numbers, which she contrasted with the strength and valour of the followers of Mortimer, her fear gave way to resentment, and her cheek burned with indignation.

"By the light of heaven," cried she, with flashing eyes, "thou art upon some mad scheme which will betray thee into a civil war, the desire of those hot-brained and portionless adventurers thou dost ever keep at thine elbow! What, Edward, thou art sure splenetic! and the rough words of the marcher, honest Bertrand du Chatelet, have engendered

these fond fancies in thee ! Go to— thou art an idle boy, and dost not know, I see, how to employ thy time. Remember the fate of thy father — he contended, was overcome, and died.”

“ Ha ! may I die the death he did when I forget it,” cried Edward ; whilst very anguish made his lips quiver, and his eyes stream with tears.

“ By Saint Mary of Paris,” said the queen, surveying her son with a steady and scrutinizing air, “ I find thou art mischievous, and I am in doubt, Sir King, whether it be not better to put a restraint upon thee.”

The king raised his eyes and laid his hand upon the hilt of his braquemart ; but was unable to speak from indignation. The queen, with a countenance beaming scorn and defiance, then continued : “ Often hast thou taunted me with thy father’s death, as though my hands were coloured with his blood ; and, with dark hints at some future vengeance, hast set my life in peril of thy power. Where be thy proofs that I did slay King Edward, or knew in aught that he fell by

treachery ? Holy St. Mary knows, that what I did in curbing Edward's power, and afterwards in deposing him, was done for thee—for love of thee alone—and this, forsooth, is my reward. But, for his blood, be it on those that shed it; not upon me, who am as clear as thou art.”

“ Fair mother,” said Edward, somewhat appeased by the queen’s defence, “ I would hope so, next my own salvation. For the wife, that, without remorse, can throw by affection, and, stripped of humanity, hold the dire steel to her husband’s throat, or give the word which fastens on his murderer, must be a devil, not a mortal woman ; and God forbid that history in her page should liken thee to this devil, and call upon the curses of posterity to follow thee unto the general doom. No ; when we meet at the dread bar of trial, may my father aloud acquit thee of disloyalty.”

We can only pretend, in the shadow of perspective, to depict the violent agitation and mutations of countenance experienced by Isabel during the speech

of her son. She tottered towards a chair, upon which she leaned to sustain the weight of her body, having no power of self support ; and continued to gaze upon the face of the king, as if it had been that of her husband's ghost risen from the dead for her condemnation. It was a long time before she had power of speech sufficient to make any reply ; and when she had summoned resolution to speak, she delivered herself in broken language, and with an aspect which at once betrayed horror, fear, rage, and apprehension, accompanied with a wild and demoniac grin, which was intended to masque the bitter feelings of her heart.

“ Thou dost say this — I know thou dost — thou say'st it to fathom me. Thy heart, Edward — thy heart is full of suspicion — thou hast summoned this horrible spectre — this image of blood — to see if I will accuse myself. But thou art deceived — thou mayest wring my heart-strings as though they were of wire, but thou shalt not probe deeper than it lists me.”

"I mean it not, fair mother," replied the young king; "thou art my mother, though thou wert even guilty."

"Thy mother!" returned the queen, with a haughty dignity; "yes, the mother of the young leopard, that would fain lap the blood of his dam!"

"Thou dost wrong me, by Saint Edward," cried the king; "I hold thee in dear reverence, or I had not so long brooked the presumption of thy followers. What are Mortimer and Du Chatelet to me, that I should bear their rivalship and their insolence? No; by the bold knight Saint George, but for thee, those traitors had long hid their heads in the dust."

"Traitors, son Edward," returned Isabel, "are they none; but the worthies and champions of thy throne and kingdom."

"Beshrew their worthihood," cried the king, mournfully; "it has reft me of my friends, made me a prisoner in my own realm, sown rancour and dissension among my very servants, cheated my uncle Kent into an infamous plot of purpose to destroy him, emptied my

treasury to the furthest mark, and sold my sovereignty over Scotland for a paltry and particular bribe. These are the proofs of their love. They need reward, and they shall surely have it."

" Ah! Edward," cried the queen, with a feeling of despondency and apprehension which appeared to her prophetic, " I see thou art fierce, and headstrong, and implacable as thy stern grandsire. Thy friends are beloved beyond measure; but he who presumes to offend thee once, hath no chance of peace or reconciliation. Thy soul is like the alpine rock, which the sun may melt, but which the winter storm and the wild hurricane render more flinty and obdurate. But bethink thee, Edward, a conqueror doth gain more applause by pardoning his enemies, than by pursuing his advantage to their utter destruction; and despair will urge such men as Mortimer and Du Chatelet to leave thee, should'st thou vanquish them, but the blazing ruins and ravaged lands of a desert kingdom—"

The king raised his head, and, with a

penetrating glance, said, “ Belike I am braved, then ; and March and Du Chatellet are already prepared to dispute the crown with me.”

“ No, by the rood, fair son, not so,” replied Queen Isabel ; “ they are now loyal subjects to their lord, and would fain remain so.”

“ Then bid them use my friends with kindness,” said the king, who was apprehensive, if he were openly to avow his intentions, his departure would be opposed ; “ release those of my party who have stood against their desires, disband those troops of armed retainers, who plunder and affright my lieges. Let them come humbly and demand my grace, and, these things done, they will deserve my favour. We go to the convent of Dominicans without the town, where if thou wouldest hunt, fair mother, we will attend thee to the sport.”

This conversation had passed within the hall ; but so remotely from the attendants of either personage, that no part of it had been overheard. The king now took leave of his mother, and joined

the Queen Philippa in her private chamber, whence they soon departed ; and, with their train of nobles, knights, and military attendants, quitted the castle. As they rode along they were joined by the populace, who made the welkin ring with the roar of their acclamations. “ God save King Edward !” and “ God save Queen Philippa !” were reiterated by ten thousand mouths, which seemed to vie with each other in the heartiness of their invocations. Besides, each house turned out its inmates ; and the royal cavalcade was soon strengthened by the accession of several hundreds of the nobility and chivalry of the king’s party, who not being admitted to the castle, were constrained to reside in the town. Among the rest, the Lord Abbot Ingulphus and Sir Paschal Marcel, who were already prepared to attend the court, mounted their horses and followed at a distance, having no opportunity of gaining a proximate station to the royal pair. Thus attended, Edward and his consort passed the gates of the town, and, “ with stately step and slow,” in about half an

hour gained the monastery of Black or Dominican Friars, which stood a short distance beyond the walls. The superior and his brethren came out to receive their temporal sovereign, and, with great reverence and affection, welcomed him and his partner, and ushered them into the monastery. The nobles and knights, who attended in the royal retinue, accompanied them into the house; whilst the populace and inferior retainers were made happy by a largess of the king and his companions, and by the munificent hospitality of the Dominicans. Ale and provisions were brought forth and set before the people, who, at every mouthful and every cup, roared forth the praises of the king and of the holy brethren of Saint Dominick. But the king's desire of privacy was speedily intimated to the populace, whose presence would have been a check upon his secret movements, or whose participation in his design, had it been communicated to them, would have betrayed him to his adversaries; and they were, therefore, commanded to depart the convent yard

about mid-day. The king's order was executed at the proper time, amid plaudits and vows of eternal devotion to his service; and a guard of men-at-arms was stationed at the portal of the house, instructed to admit only such persons as were known to be of the royal party. In the course of the day, Edward received numerous assurances of support, as well from many great barons and knights in person, as by messages from those to whom his intentions were known, and who were still at a distance busily engaged in providing for all issues. The Abbot Ingulphus and Sir Paschal Marcel, at the desire of the king, remained with him, and rendered as much assistance with their advice as the more juvenile and hardy knights promised to do by their effective services. As night approached, the chieftains of the king's party drew their retainers into concentration; and, among the rest, Sir Aubrey Marcel armed those of his father, and led them silently through the gates, which were secured for the king's interest, to the convent of Dominicans.

King Edward, his Queen, the Earl of Lancaster, and the other great lords and knights were engaged in close council on his arrival ; all of whom received him openly with caresses and congratulations. He had now resumed his harness, the identical armour he had worn at the time of his detention at and escape from Malpas ; and which he had left with Sir Walter Manny, when he quitted England ; and to his gorget he still wore attached the portrait of his mistress, the beautiful and unfortunate Morgana. But the rosy blush and flexible features of youth, were now melted down by the burning rays of the eastern sun ; and the brown and unvarying hue and resolute character of manhood, were stamped indelibly on his countenance. It was not Achilles among the daughters of Lycomedes, but Achilles sternly bemoaning the loss of his Patroclus, and terrible in the sweep of his vengeance,

Edward held forth his hand, and looking round as if to collect the pillars of his strength, said, “ Welcome Marcel ; thou art here harnessed and weaponed

as a valiant knight. God speed thine arm for Edward and his right,— Ho, Walter Manny, art thou at hand?”

“ Yea, my liege,” replied the knight of Hainault, “ some words of counsel I am gathering from the Lord Abbot Ingulphus, an able leader in battle or surprise.”

“ What is thy thought, Lord Abbot?” said the king; “ let it be public, if it please thee.”

“ It is said, most royal liege,” replied Ingulphus, “ that the followers of March within the Castle exceed five hundred men, well disciplined and harnessed. One-tenth of them, may they but know our purpose, would repel our entrance from the vault, and if their force be not distraught and parted, it is odds that our adventure may be foiled. Were it not best to give a false alarm, as though we meant a charge by escalade, and so call off their strength to the walls?”

“ Thou say’st rightly, valiant abbot,” replied Edward; “ thine experience doth better our green counsel. To thee, Walter Manny, guided by our good Lord

Abbot, we leave the conduct of this adventure ; and we trust thou wilt find our foes work enough at the walls. What knights will show their valiance under Sir Walter's pennon ?

" So please your grace," said the Abbot, " I will gladly do my devoir on this service ; and for so much as these old limbs can bear their part, by St. George the will shall not be wanting."

" The fire is not extinct, I see, Sir Abbot, though the embers are grey," replied Edward ; " but though thy courage may do much, thy counsel will do more. No ; do thou attend us — to thy son we look for the battle, whilst thou shalt direct the storm."

Many knights and young noblemen volunteered their services under Sir Walter's command ; and at length a force, amounting to five hundred men-at-arms with their followers, was selected for the diversion. At the same time a signal was concerted, whereby Sir Walter and his friends might learn the exact moment when the king and his followers were about to enter the castle. This was

by means of a trumpet, which, being sounded when the royal party attained the end of the vault, might be reiterated by a bugle stationed at the mouth of the subterranean passage, and could with facility be heard to the very walls of the fortress. “And I make mine avow to the peacock,” cried Sir Raimonnet de la Folie, “that if I hear ye hard pressed, I will cut a way to your rescue.”

“ And I make mine avow, as I am a true knight,” cried the Earl Henry of Lancaster, “that I will never eat bread, nor drink wine, sleep in bed, nor mount courser of war till King Edward have his enemies beneath his feet, and be supreme and uncontrouled in his dominion and right.”

“ And may I never be embraced by friend or mistress,” cried Sir Walter Manny, “if I enter fortress or house of refuge before I have won yon castle wall.”

“ And I avow to Saint George, and to the Holy Saint Mary,” said the pour-sivant, in a low but fixed tone, “that I will never bow knee to saint, nor say

prayer to the King of Heaven, nor hear holy mass, nor seek portion of my salvation, till by this hand Du Chatelet be brought to the earth a senseless corpse."

Each of the other knights, as the custom then was, made his vow of chivalry. Some of the younger esquires who had never before engaged in a perilous enterprise, tied up one of their arms, and others covered one eye, vowing to hold themselves in that condition until the performance of the adventure. And many of the young knights of the bath, who still wore the maiden tassel at their shoulders, vowed they would that night get rid of their badges either by gallant deeds or a glorious death.

Soon after the ringing of vespers, Sir William Eland, constable of the castle, appeared at the convent, and was made acquainted with the arrangements which had been concerted for causing a diversion of the enemy's forces, a precaution he much approved ; and by his direction, Sir Walter Manny and his comrades in arms were appointed to commence their attack upon an outer barbican of the

Castle, where the defences were weakest, and where, consequently, the greatest alarm would be excited. This barbican was the most remote from the point of egress from the vault, and King Edward and his council therefore supposed that a sufficient number of men might be introduced into the keep of the fortress, before the garrison could be recalled to overpower them.

About the tenth hour, Edward prepared personally for his adventure. Without retiring, he commanded his harness to be brought him, and, with the assistance of Sir Raimonnet de la Folie and Sir Aubrey Marcel, he put on a gambezon, gorget, and hauberk, together with hose and hood of double chain-mail, and a light basnet surrounded by a splendid diadem, which gave ornament to his otherwise plain and undecorated armour ; above his hauberk he wore a splendid quartelois of crimson damask, richly wrought with golden leopards, being the device royal ; and from his baldric depended his common single sword, with a poniard of mercy braced on his right

side. Altogether, Edward was not only a handsome and dignified king, but he was also a stout and stalwart knight; and so far was he from declining the shock of personal rencontre, that he sought with avidity every means of gratifying his thirst of glory, and of displaying his strength and prowess. This trait of his noble character, the historian of chivalry, Froissart, remarks, in his romantic description of the combat which Edward sustained against Sir Eustace de Ribeumont, under the walls of Calais; a combat in which his gallantry was as conspicuous as his magnanimity and generosity to his vanquished foe were remarkable, in the praises and rewards which he afterwards bestowed upon him.

Sir Raimonnet, as he assisted to buckle on the king's armour, could not refrain from making remarks upon the antiquity of its fashion.

“ By my faith, Sir King,” he said, carefully looking over the harness,
“ William the Bastard and Cœur de Lion

wore such armour as this — the like hauberk, hose, and hood : — your face is exposed ; and as many defences have ye as are sufficient to swathe ye like a mummy, or stifle ye with heat — would your grace honour my poor arms, they were heartily at your service.”

“ Gramercy, Sir Knight, for thy courtesy,” replied the king ; “ but such arms as the Conqueror and Cœur de Lion wore, the unfledged Edward need not be ashamed of. As for my face, Sir Raimonet, it is not, like thine, too handsome to put in jeopardy.”

“ Nay, but your grace,” replied the French knight, turning to the queen, “ be judge between us. — Is not a casque of this fashion, more safe and handsome than an iron pot?”

He took his own finely polished and highly decorated burgonet out of the hands of his squire, and placing it on his head, closed the visor and beaver. “ Your grace,” he continued, “ may observe this helmet is impervious to every weapon ; neither lance, nor sword, nor dagger,

can pierce it ; whilst, in an open hood and basnet, a passing foe may dash your brains out with a dagger stroke."

" Ah ! but Sir knight," replied Philippa smiling, " the greater danger, the more honour. If a foe came within the scope of my champion's sword, I should look shy on him if he held aloof, and bartered his fame for the faint blush of beauty. No ; let King Edward lose his very visage with the scars of honourable daring, and I shall hold him no whit worsened for the change."

" By our lady of Paris," exclaimed the knight, gazing with admiration upon the queen, " Isoude was not so beautiful, nor Sabrina so courageous ! — Fair queen, I beg a boon on my knee."

" What is thy request, Sir knight ?" replied the queen.

" But a riband from thy volupere," returned Sir Raimonnet, " I will wear it in my hood amid the mêlée to-night ; for I swear, no better defence shall guard my head."

The queen smiled, and took a riband

from her head-dress, which she gave to the chivalrous knight; and he instantly attached it to one of the pearl rosettes which studded the rim of his hood.

CHAP. XIV.

The strengthened foe has rushed upon your guard,
And cut their passage through them to the gate ;
Implacable Rameses leads them on,
Breathing revenge, and panting for your blood.

Busiris.

ABOUT the tenth hour, when, according to the information of Sir Wm. Eland, all persons within the castle, except the regular watch, would be retired to rest, Sir Walter Manny, and his partners in the proposed attack, drew off towards the castle, whilst king Edward, and his followers, quitted the convent of Dominicans, and proceeded under the constable's guidance, to the mouth of the cavern. It was situated on the side of a crumbling and shaggy hill, and was overgrown with hazel and gorse bushes, presenting, of all places, the least likelihood for the discovery of an excavation. The bottom of the hill was wet and marshy, and the road leading to the embouchure, per-

plexed with a thousand intricacies surmountable only by those who knew the stations of advance, each of which, occupied by a small party of resolute men, would have proved an insuperable bar to a considerable army. The ground, where the marsh did not extend, was rough, broken, declivitous, and studded with ancient trees, which, interweaving their long arms and exuberant foliage, would have veiled the sun in his mid-day splendour. It was a place where the Druids might, unseen, have performed their ceremonies, and where the bards and ovates might, unheard, have tuned their harps and raised imperishable monuments to the princes of Britain.

But there was nothing in this night's appearance which could have called forth the admiration and energies of the poet. It was neither graced by the presence of the silver moon, which communicates a solemn and holy beauty to nature, nor was it disturbed and defaced by the presence of loud misrule and driving tempest! The storm-fiend was at rest in his airy hall, and suffered the glow-worm to

hang out his tiny lamp in peace, and the solitary owl to hoot pæans of adoration to the divinity of darkness. A dense and chilling mist, common in the midland counties about the middle of autumn, stretched itself over the country, and effectually deprived the royal party of what little benefit they might have derived from the upper atmosphere. But, as the ground was well known to the constable and a few others of the king's friends, they reached the mouth of the cave without impediment or difficulty. Here the king made a selection of those knights who should lead the vaward of the adventure, himself designing to bear them company. These, as our readers will surmise, were his nearest and boldest friends: the Earl of Lancaster, Sir Aubrey Marcel, Sir Raimonnet de la Folie, Sir William Montacute, Sir Humphrey, Sir Edward and Sir William de Bohun, Sir Ralph Stafford, Sir William de Clinton, and Sir John Nevil, of Hornby. The followers of these knights, exceeding a thousand men-at-arms eager to display their courage in the presence of their

sovereign, were ordered to take their station immediately behind, and to bear down those that should resist ; whilst the knights themselves were engaged in the seizure of Mortimer, whom it was resolved, if possible, to secure alive, in order that he might be punished by a legal tribunal.

It was some time before the men-at-arms could clear the entrance to the cavern, which had not been used within the memory of man, and was, therefore, like that of Montesinos, overgrown with briars and brambles ; but at length, a way was opened, and the constable, bearing a lighted torch, pressed forward at the head of the knights. Not a word was uttered ; but each warrior, grasping his lance, mace, or battle-axe, kept his eye on the guide, and anticipated the combat. The silence was inexpressibly awful : the very tread of the host, though each man walked lightly and cautiously, rang through the cavern, which returned a solemn and deep sounding echo. The hollow reverberation, as the royal party afterwards learned, was heard distinctly

in the castle, whose inmates fancied it to be thunder, or some sound of supernatural agency.

As the king and his followers proceeded, the cavern, which at the mouth was wide, lofty and level, became narrow, low, and uneven ; and, in some places, the water, oozing from the sides, had dripped down and formed small and stagnant pools through which they were forced to pass knee-deep. The road was soon too strait for more than two to move conveniently abreast, and raising its level, became steep and rugged. The silence was now broken by the mail of those in advance clanking against the broken rocks which impeded their passage, and the rude plash of those in the rear stepping every moment into the lodgments of water. These sounds were also plainly heard in the fortress, and Mortimer, who was in the queen's chamber, came forth into the guard-room and enquired the cause. But not being able to obtain any satisfactory account, and the noises being still continued, he dispatched a man-at-arms to the chamber

of the constable, bidding him instantly to attend. The soldier soon returned with information that the constable was not to be found, news which awakened all the suspicions of the favourite.

“ Not to be found ! ” cried March, breathless with alarm, and flying to the door of Du Chatelet’s apartment, “ What ho ! Du Chatelet ! Trumpington ! Monmouth ! What ho ! Treason, sirs—come forth and arm. Hie, knaves, to the ramparts — call out the garrison — bring me my harness.”

His outcry soon alarmed the whole castle, the several chambers of which poured forth their warlike inhabitants just as they were aroused from their sleep. The marcher, with his mantle thrown around him, and his sword of arms in his hand, burst out of his chamber, and cried, “ What, sirs, in the devil’s name, is the cause of this alarm ? Where are your foes that ye cry out, as if ye were dead men, but for succour and rescue ? Now, Roger Mortimer, what is thy fear ? ”

“ Fear have I none more than thyself,

Du Chatelet ; replied March, “but Eland is fled, and armed men are at hand. We have heard the ringing of their mail.”

At this moment, a soldier, who had been out upon the barbican of the keep to look forth for the invaders, came hastily into the guard-room, and said the barriers of the castle were filled with men-at-arms.

“ Arm, friends, arm !” cried Mortimer. “ The king’s departure, Eland’s flight, are now proofs of treachery. See the bridge be up, and let go the portcullis. Arm ! and to the ramparts. Saint George for queen Isabel !”

“ Malpas for Du Chatelet,” exclaimed the marcher. “ What ho ! Sir Squire, attend and arm me.”

The Earl of March, the Baron of Malpas, and the other lords, knights, and men-at-arms, quitted the guard-room to arm and prepare for defence ; but they were speedily recalled by a loud trumpet blast which appeared to sound from the very midst of the keep, and which was answered by a bugle at the barriers. The queen, wild with affright, and but

half clothed, now appeared at the door of her chamber, whilst Du Chatelet, Mortimer, Trumpington and Monmouth, harnessed only with their hauberks, and armed with battle-axes and daggers, again rushed out of their apartments.

“ Ha ! Jesu Christ,—Mortimer ! ” cried Isabel, wringing her hands, “ what dreadful sounds are these ? We are betrayed,—the foe is in the castle :—Hark that cry ! ‘ Saint George for King Edward ! ’ ”

“ By the breath of my body, it is sooth,” cried Du Chatelet.

“ Ye will not abandon me, gallant knights ! ” exclaimed the queen.

“ No, fair queen,” replied the marcher, who took upon him the conduct of the defence, the Earl of March appearing to be incapacitated by the suddenness of the attack, “ retire to your chamber ; we will defend ye until our bodies be hacked in pieces. Out, some of ye, to the walls, and keep them like valiant men-at-arms. Whence came that trumpet-blast ? Mortimer ! Roger Mortimer ! arouse thee ; for thee and thy cause we

fight. Be thou valiant and true to thyself in this hour of need. Keep ward here, while I unmask the traitors. Trumpington with me — Malpas for Du Chatelet!"

Shouting his battle-cry, the bold marcher, followed by Sir Hugh Trumpington, and several other knights, flew towards the door; but in a moment it was forced open, and Sir Aubrey Marcel at the head of the royal party burst into the room. The queen shrieked, seized Mortimer by the arm, and, dragging him into her chamber, made fast the door."

"Yield to your sovereign!" cried Marcel rushing forward; "yield, or die."

"Die thou, whoever thou art," replied the marcher, striking a dreadful blow upon the crest of the poursuivant, which clove away his helmet and made him, for a moment, giddy and astonished. But the marcher had over-reached himself in the stroke, and, before he could recover his equipoise and renew his attack, Marcel seized him by the throat, and held him until he had recovered his own strength and recollection. Du Chatelet also grappled with his foe, and gazed

fiercely, but wonder-struck, upon his countenance.

“Thou art no mortal knight,” said the marcher under his breath, while the sweat-drops poured down his forehead, “but some damned fiend in the likeness of a traitor, raised by the devil for my shame. Let go thy grasp—I will not fight with thee.”

“Christ’s curses on me and on my house,” returned the poursuivant, “if thou and I together quit this spot. False traitor, it is Aubrey Marcel who tells thee he lives for thy shame and chastisement. Yield if thou wilt, and die like a dastard.”

The marcher, exerting his gigantic strength, with a smile of scorn threw the poursuivant from him, and prepared to renew the combat. But the knights of the king’s party, who had already vanquished those that opposed them, whereby Trumpington and Monmouth were slain, hastened to relieve Sir Aubrey; and would have killed his enemy with their lances but for his interposition.

“Hold, knights!” he exclaimed, “the

marcher is my foe — the prize reserved for my own achievement. We are champions in the lists, and our Sovereign shall marshal the combat.”

“ Stand back, sirs — fall on knights,” cried the chivalrous Edward, putting his followers back with his lance; “ do your devoirs manfully for God and your ladies.”

“ Saint George for Marcel!” cried the poursuivant, raising his hammer of arms.

“ Our lady for Du Chatelet,” exclaimed the marcher, resuming the combat.

The knights and men-at-arms stood around, watching, with eager eyes, the perilous encounter of these grim and renowned champions, each of whom displayed a miracle of courage in attacking his enemy, and of skill in his own defence. The weapons with which they were armed were the most formidable in use in that or any previous or succeeding age, and required amazing strength to be handled with dexterity and effect. The hauberks of the combatants, formed of double chain-mail, were soon cut through as though they had been made

of silk ; and their blood, streaming over their armour, rendered the floor wet and slippery. At length the marcher, by a stroke which nearly killed his adversary, broke his battle-axe, the head of which, flying aside, severely wounded a man-at-arms. But, undismayed at this event, he threw down the remains of the shaft, and once more grappled the poursuivant in the hope of wresting from him his hammer of arms. Aided by his superior strength, and by the effects of the blow upon his enemy, this proved a task far from difficult ; and the gallant poursuivant must have fallen beneath his herculean antagonist had not Du Chattelet's foot, in struggling upon the bloody floor, slipped beneath him, whereby he fell, and dragged down Sir Aubrey with him. At this moment, a cry was heard from the ring, “ Remember Vernon,” and Marcel taking advantage of the hint, abandoned his hammer, drew his poniard of mercy, and sheathed it in the throat of his foe. The blood, foaming into the windpipe, rattled audibly, whilst the marcher, in his dying agony,

raised the heavy weapon which he grasped, and beat the air as though he had wielded a willow wand. Several times he attempted to speak ; but his voice “ sounded like a cannon in a vault, that might not be distinguished,” and he breathed his last in a convulsion of muscle and feature which held the body long after life was departed.

The king, after committing the pour-suivant, who was nearly insensible, to the care of his friends, commanded the queen’s chamber to be forced ; an order which was instantly accomplished by the application of a score of maces and battle-axes, before which the strong oaken pannels flew into ten thousand splinters, and the room was left bare and exposed to the gaze of the multitude. A piercing shriek was heard at the moment the door gave way, and queen Isabel, her face wet with tears, her hair dishevelled, her look and attitude wild and convulsed, stood before the fallen and miserable favourite, who had thrown himself beside her in an agony of fear and desperation.

“Forward!” cried Edward, “seize the traitor — drag him forth.”

“Fair son, fair son,” exclaimed the queen, regardless of her own safety, and concerned only about the life of her paramour, “have pity on the gentle Mortimer!”

But the intercession of the queen, as it plainly indicated the feeling by which she was moved, would have proved rather of disservice to March than otherwise, had Edward needed any accession of fuel to preserve the fire of his resentment. As it was, he contented himself with paying no regard to the cries and entreaties of his mother, who even threw herself on her knees, and with uplifted hands besought his mercy. But, commanding the favourite to be dragg'd from behind his protectress, he gave him in charge to Montacute and Sir John Nevil, who, afraid of putting their prize in jeopardy by suffering him to remain in the castle, where his retainers were still powerful, or by conducting him out of the fortress by the common road through the portal, which, as

they could hear, by the cries of the soldiery and the horrid din of arms, was now hotly disputed, thought it most expedient to carry away their prisoner by the subterranean outlet, whereby all risk would be avoided. This was effected without difficulty, and Edward, placing a guard upon his mother, left the keep, and, followed by his knights and men-at-arms, descended into the court-yard. Here, unwilling to spill the blood of his subjects, though in open rebellion, unnecessarily, he ordered a parley to be sounded, to which the opposite faction gave ready audience. The capture of Mortimer, the death of Du Chatelet, Trumpington, and Monmouth, and the possession of the keep by the royal party, were stated to them as events which took away all chance of a successful defence, whilst, on the other hand, the king offered grace and mercy, if they would lay down their arms. A short time, spent in conference by the knights and leaders of Mortimer's faction, served to induce in them an acquiescence to the will of their sovereign, and the whole

castle was immediately surrendered to the royal party. Sir Walter Manny and his comrades marched through the extended portal, and the dawn of day beheld the royal standard floating over the towers of Nottingham.

CHAP. XV.

A l'autel de Marie,
Ils contractoient tous deux,
Cette union cherie,
Qui seulle rend heureux.

Chacun dans la chapelle,
Il dit en les voyant,
Amour á la plus belle,
Honneur au plus vaillant.

Partant pour la Syrie.

THE fate of the Earl of March, of that man who had shown more promptitude and audacity in his elevation, and in the time of his authority, than courage in the hour of his decadence, is known to all persons. He was conducted from Nottingham to London, where he was committed to the Tower; and the king having called a new parliament, before which Mortimer was impeached upon many articles, and condemned to die upon the mere notoriety of his crimes,

without proof of any kind, or being called upon for his defence; the once proud and ambitious favourite, the envy of the chivalry, and the delight of the fair, was drawn and publicly hanged on the common gallows at Tyburn. After being suspended as a gazing stock for the insulting populace during two days, his body was cut down, and granted to the Friars Minors, who buried it in their church. As for the queen, whose guilt was more flagitious than that of her paramour, she escaped with a reduction of her dower, and confinement to her house at Risings, situated at a short distance from London, where Edward, more out of form than affection, annually visited her.

The king was not, however, so wholly taken up in punishing the guilty, as to neglect rewarding those who had hazarded every thing in his service. On Sir Aubrey Marcel, who speedily recovered from the wounds he had received in his combat with the marcher, he conferred the barony of Malpas, which Du Chatelet had forfeited by his treason, together

with the same rights and privileges as his rival had possessed, ‘ut Marchio de Marchia Walliae.’ To the other lords and knights he granted money and lands, as may be clearly ascertained by the Rot. Parl. 4 Edw. 3d. n. 13.; and the great value of which testified at once his generosity and his gratitude.

In the mean time, the beautiful widow of the deceased marcher, Bertrand Du Chatelet, had been informed of those events which had restored the king his crown and herself to liberty, of the person by whom, and of the manner in which her deliverance was achieved. The Abbot Ingulphus, whose paternal regard for her, impelled him to communicate the good tidings as early as possible, sent forward the cross-bearer, father Adrian, under the escort of the mounted military retainers of the abbey, who made such speed upon the road, that at the end of his second day’s journey he came in sight of the lofty towers of Malpas. But he found, speedy as he had travelled, rumour had outstripped him. The general report of Mortimer’s

fall, of Du Chatelet's death, and of the king's superiority of power, had reached the Welsh border, on the evening of the same day that the revolution had been performed; a fact not at all incredible, when we consider the almost lightning-speed with which the news of a great event, of a battle lost and won, of a revolution in kingdoms, of the sudden death of an eminent personage, more especially if it be by foul practice, or if any other catastrophe equally remarkable or shocking have, from the foundation of civilized society, been scattered over the world. And although, at this time, the regular means of communication, even between town and town, were defective and precarious, it must be considered that there were two parties in the state, whose interest it was, on the one hand, to give every and instant celebrity to such events as had now happened, and, on the other, to propagate a disbelief of them until they had taken measures for their own security; and, as each of these parties were in constant communication with their own adherents throughout

England, the rapidity of circulation, in this instance, is easily accounted for. Thus, the sub-prior of the abbey of Malpas, who, in the absence of his superior, held the crosier pro tempore, on receiving the news from Chester, immediately gave them notoriety among the vassals and tenantry, whilst Bonnelance, the constable, who had likewise received full intelligence, gave forth a public contradiction of it, and stated that the king and his party had fallen beneath the faction of their adversaries. But the arrival of father Adrian, and the military retainers who had personally borne a share in the enterprise, and the letters of the Abbot Ingulphus, to the sub-prior, which were openly read, overcame all doubt and disbelief, and the marauders themselves were constrained to give way to popular opinion, and confess the fact. And this was not all; for the constable, having been informed by the sub-prior, that the barony of Malpas, forfeited to the crown by the treason of Du Chatelet, was already conferred upon Sir Aubrey Marcel, renounced the party of his late

lord, avowed himself and those under his command to be at the disposal of the poursuivant, as his liege retainers ; and threw open the fortress to all those who professed themselves the friends of King Edward, and the new Baron of Malpas.

The Lady Blanche with her female attendants now quitted the castle and retired to her own patrimony, the barony of Harding, to which she had been for four years an entire stranger, and where the vassals and tenantry, having long groaned under the government of a constable appointed by Du Chatelet, whose exactions and oppression were not surpassed by those of his lord, were thrown into raptures of delight at her return and their own deliverance. Harding Castle once more became a scene of peace, and of protection to the vassals and retainers of the house, whilst hospitality, which had been banished during the fierce possession of the men at arms, again extended the portal, and gave a welcome to all comers.

A fortnight had scarcely elapsed since the arrival of Father Adrian at Malpas,

when the Abbot Ingulphus, accompanied by his son, brothers, the monks and yeomanry of his train, returned to the monastery, amid the acclamations and exulting shouts of the assembled multitude. To Sir Aubrey, the constable with great reverence surrendered the keys of the castle ; but, as the new baron had learned from Alan Waldeyff the prominent part which Bonnelance had played, in protecting the body of Vernoun from indignity at the time of his own escape, and as Sir Aubrey believed that, under proper government, he would with fidelity fulfil his station, for which he was perfectly qualified in point of courage and experience, he returned to him his command, accompanied with a caution regarding his future conduct.

“ Let me not hear,” said the young and generous baron, “ of plunderings, harrowings, or fire raisings. The first vassal of mine that dares to lay hand upon cattle or moveables not his own, dies, if he were of my own blood. Call in your men at arms, and especially Guisebert Hay ; he hath no business at Caergwy-

neth now, for King Edward hath restored the barony to its ancient lord. And I charge thee, Bonnelance, as thou dost value my favour and thine own life, commence no incursion upon the Welsh border. If any of their chiefs appear on this side Dee, then mount, sirs, and show your valiance ; not else, as ye shall answer me.”

By this grave charge, and the steadiness with which Sir Aubrey pursued the line of his resolution, calculated as it was to restore peace and confidence to the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, and to subdue that exercise of wanton and riotous license, to which the retainers of Du Chatelet had been accustomed, the whole border, from beyond Harding to the bridge of Bangor, which had lately exhibited a scene ravaged, desert, and depopulated, was restored to a state of inhabitancy and cultivation. The farmers and cottagers, driven from their dwellings by the cruel incursions of the borderers, now returned, and plenty once more began to smile in the palatinate. It may easily be conceived that the praises of the

young marcher were loudly reported ; his mild, beneficent, and generous conduct, contrasted with the fierce, turbulent and oppressive government of his predecessor, was indeed worthy of admiration ; and in consequence he became as much beloved and respected, as his rival had been the object of terror and aversion.

Our readers will doubtless have surmised that the poursuivant lost no time in visiting the fair widow of his foe. He would, indeed, have been inexcusable, had he neglected that woman who for him had sacrificed all things — the enjoyments of life, the vanities of display, the fascinating triumph of beauty, the gaze and admiration of the Christian world ; not to speak of the continual mortifications which she had suffered, the brutal indifference of her husband, which she had courted rather than endured, and the uninterrupted alienation of those domestic pleasures, the exercise of which she had prohibited herself, in adopting the vizard of insanity. But the passion of her lover was, if possible, more ardent and more enduring than her own.

Her image, the only one for which he had ever felt spiritual love, was so deeply mingled with all his ideas of happiness, so profoundly incorporated with all his recollections of past suffering, and so completely identified with all those scenes of delight which appeared to form epochas in his pleasurable life, that as well might the sun have been disengaged from the system of nature, as the long loved, nay idolized, Morgana from her lover's dream of happiness. We may, therefore, use the language of the poet according to proper adaptation, when we say that Aubrey Marcel "flew on the wings of love," to the castle of his mistress, whose joy at his presence, and at beholding him entirely recovered from his wounds, was equally great as that wherewith she had received the news of Du Chatelet's fall. Blame her not, courteous and candid reader, for exulting at her deliverance from the thrall of a devil, of a fiend who had constantly thwarted her hopes of happiness, and who, in law as well as fact, (*loquor ut peritus,*) had the truth been investigated, was not her husband,

nor bound to her in the slightest degree. If there be any one with whom a doubt may remain upon the validity of my opinion, let him consult the *jus civile*, or the *lex canonica*; the compilations of Trebonian, or the spider web of the profound and inquisitive Lyndwood.

It would be travelling the same road, a practice seldom agreeable to human versatility, were we to enter minutely into the scene which passed between the lovers, on the poursuivant's arrival at Harding. It will be sufficient to say that Blanche was as eager as Sir Aubrey, to take advantage of their fortune, of that fortune which had so long been unpropitious, but which now blew them into port with a prosperous gale. A marriage was agreed upon without delay; and, as it was not then the fashion to blush, look grave, or be coy upon the question of fixing the happy day, the poursuivant had the task entirely to himself of arranging the minutiae of the ceremony, the time of its celebration, and the place of its performance. These, with the counsel and assistance of his father and uncle,

Sir Aubrey speedily determined; and it was concluded that Blanche should proceed to London, escorted by her lover and his relatives, where she should take up her residence with the Dame Annabel Beauchamp, until the day of the marriage's solemnization. This arrangement was the more suitable, as King Edward had expressed a desire to witness the conjunction of those lovers, who, exhibiting the romance of affection and fidelity, had been crossed by disappointments so bitter and unfortunate.

But although, in the days of chivalry, little ceremony was used in the appointment of the marriage solemnities, when the lady and gentleman were resolved on the fact, the custom was very different as it regarded the equipage and paraphernalia wherewith those ceremonies were to be identified. It took some time and immense expense to prepare the habits, jewels, caparisons, &c. to be used by the bride, the bridegroom, their friends and retainers, the latter of whom, to the number of several hundreds, received, as presents from their lord, rich dresses,

fine steeds, and emblazoned caparisons. The vassals of the house of Taillebois were gratified in a like manner, whilst the yeomen, sockmen, and nativi, or villains, received clothes of more homely material and less splendid decoration.

All things being at length completed, the bride and bridegroom, accompanied by the Lord Abbot Ingulphus ; Sir Paschal Marcel ; half a score attendant monks (including our ancient friend the cross-bearer,) the Welshman, Griffith Mero-doc ; the minstrel, Oliver Blondel, who took this opportunity of beholding the splendour of the court, and four hundred retainers, set out from the border, and, without interruption, and by easy journeys, reached London at the end of a week, when the Lady Blanche retired to the house of her relative, Dame Beau-champ ; and Sir Paschal conducted his brother, nephew, and their attendants, to his own residence in Southwark.

By the king's appointment, the marriage ceremony was performed in his own private chapel at Westminster, the Lord Abbot Ingulphus sustaining the part of

officiating priest, in the presence of Edward, Philippa, and the whole court. Ladies, nobles, and knights, crowded around the happy pair, to congratulate them on the termination of their ill-fortune, and the consummation of their desires. After the solemnization of the marriage, the court partook of a magnificent banquet given by the queen, in honour of the nuptials, whereat the Baron of Malpas and his bride sat upon a throne, as king and queen of the day ; whilst Edward and Philippa, in plain dresses, waited upon them at table, and served them as their retainers, with great reverence and attention. At the close of the banquet, the king and his knights retired to arm, and the queen, the bride, and the other ladies of the court, were conducted by the chamberlain and his officers to the lists, where Blanche, after a lapse of four years, resumed her throne, as La Reyne d'Amour. The bridegroom presided over the lists, as marshal of the field, whilst the king, as one of the knights of the bride, bore her colours and combated on her party. Sir Walter

Manny, the Earl of Lancaster, and Sir Raimonnet de la Folie, also wore favours as her knights, and behaved at all points as chevaliers, sans peur et sans reproche. Many feats of arms were performed in the tilts worthy of particular enumeration, many lances were broken, and many knights unhorsed ; but we have not space to recount, in detail, the actions of valour and skill that each individual exhibited, to the great delight of the king, and admiration of the ladies and whole court. Edward, above all, proved himself a good knight : he neither saved himself in the shock nor spared his competitors for fame, and the prize of chivalry was adjudged to him by the marshal, and conferred upon him by La Reyne d'Amour, amid the acclamations of the spectators.

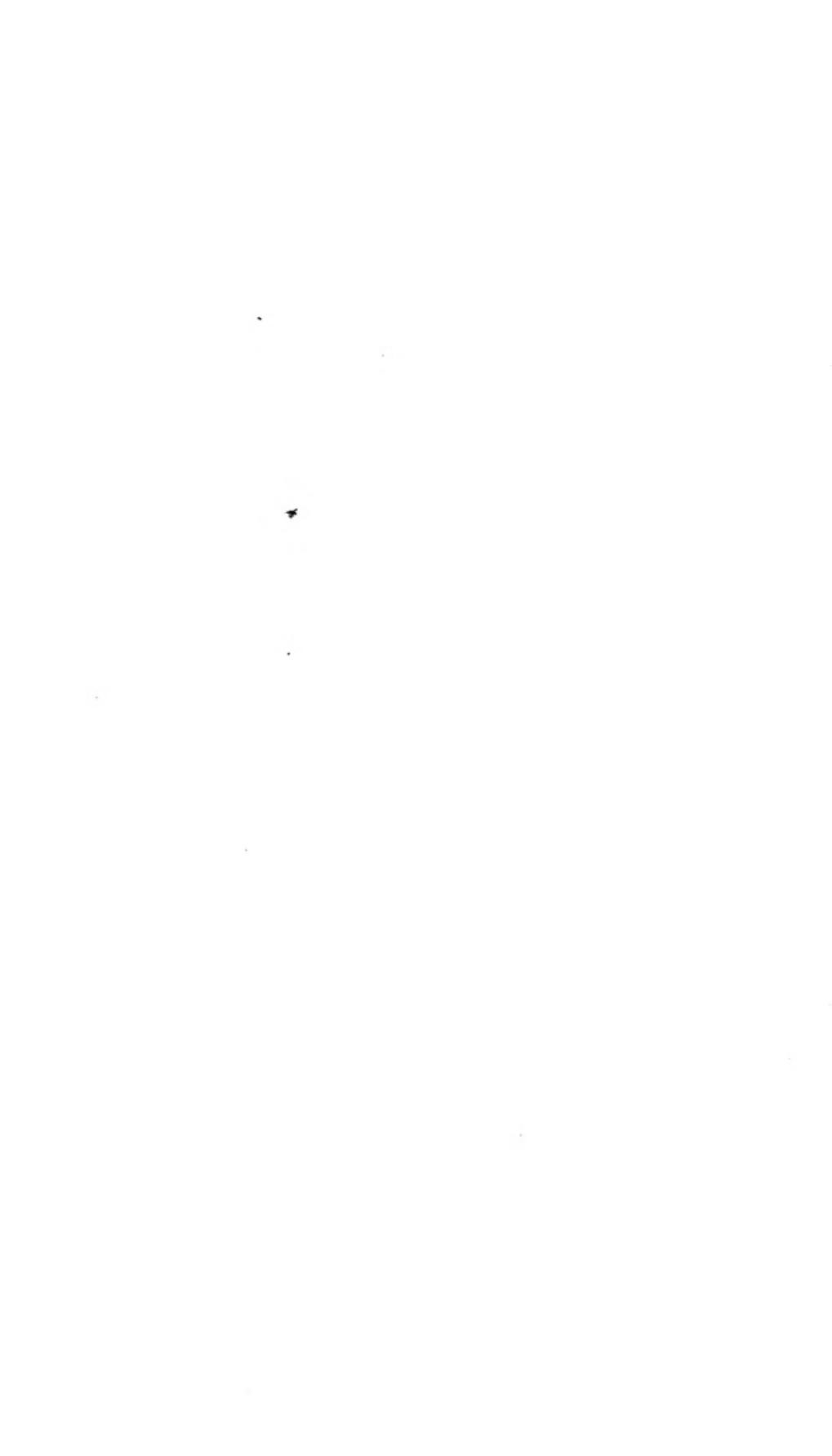
On retiring from the lists, the queen, attended by the bride and ladies of the court, returned to the hall, where a second banquet was displayed, and wines, spices, and other articles of refreshment, were handed around by the pages and knights servitors. Thence they were conducted into another apartment mag-

nificantly illuminated, where the king, the Earl of Lancaster, de la Folie, and many others, habited as masquers, were prepared to commence a scene of revelry, in which the French knight so much outshone his rivals, and exhibited antics at once so novel, so grotesque, and extraordinary, that thenceforth, he was suffered to wear the belt of mumming, without any man being so bold as to enter the ring against him. The rejoicings concluded with universal harmony and satisfaction ; and the happy pair, having taken leave of their sovereign, his amiable consort, and their friends, returned with the abbot, his brother, and their followers, to Malpas. There, in the exercise of his jurisdiction, which he administered boldly and prudently, the baron remained, occasionally paying his court to the sovereign, until Edward commenced the war against France, when, disdaining a slothful life, he first displayed his banner in the royal army with a considerable body of retainers, and gained as great a reputation for wisdom and enterprize as a leader, as he had be-

fore borne for skill and valour, in the character of a simple knight.

But when his hair had grown grey beneath his helmet, and the cares of his family demanded his attention, he left the hurry of the camp and the pathway of fame to other competitors, whom the fire and enthusiasm of youth pushed forward in the dangers of arms, and the career of glory. And the happiness, gentle reader, which he experienced in the enjoyment of his wife and family, the love and fidelity of his vassals, the respect and friendship of his sovereign and his peers, and the esteem of the whole world, during his latter days, amply compensated for the dangers and the chagrin he had suffered whilst bearing the title of *Le Pour-suivant d'Amour*.

THE END.







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